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*The Modern  
Parisienne*

*Octave Uzanne*







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PARISIENNE**

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**LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN**

# THE MODERN PARISIENNE

BY

OCTAVE UZANNE

AUTHOR OF "FASHION IN PARIS"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
THE BARONESS VON HUTTEN



LONDON  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1912



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## INTRODUCTION

To write a good book on women a man must possess one quality over and above those indispensable to any serious literary work.

Besides thorough documentation, literary skill, and justice, he must have a sense of humour.

Without the latter, the former will avail him nothing, for his eyes will be blind to us as we really are. And this great quality, as well as the others, M. Uzanne possesses in a very unusual degree. We grieve him, we incense him; we disgust him, but—we also amuse him; and while he respects the good amongst us, he pities the unfortunate, hates the wicked, and—loves all of us a little.

Therefore, as he is a poet, and something of a reconstructionist, as well as a careful statistician, he has been able to write about us a very wise as well as a very interesting and beautiful book.

Perhaps some of us Anglo-Saxons may not agree with all that M. Uzanne says about Parisian women; perhaps some of us may dare to doubt his justification in agreeing with Balzac that it was Paris who "out of the mere female created the Woman"; perhaps we do not think the lady of Paris the only perfect hostess in the world; that

▼

her beauty, or her still more enchanting ugliness, is the most potent on earth.

That she is the best conversationalist among women I certainly do doubt. Not being English, I may say frankly that while Frenchwomen are the most enchanting chatterers I have ever heard, a certain type of English-woman seems to me a far better talker.

But who would quarrel with this Frenchman's amiable prejudice in favour of his countrywomen?

Not I, for one.

According, then, to our author, the woman of Paris of to-day is vain, unselfish, hardworking, lazy, luxury-loving, cruel, kind, beautiful, despicable, motherly, vicious, pious, treacherous, and incomprehensible.

He speaks tenderly, pityingly, sternly of them; he loves their little foibles, their little artifices. He loves their painted lips, their *traits de crayon noir*; he adores their rice-powder; their little treacheries and affectations delight him.

But he pities them; gravely and sincerely he deplores their misery, and sharply he arraigns the men whose selfishness causes so much of it.

The Government, too, he chides for its treatment of women; treatment about which one cannot read without indignation. And—it would not be good for a “sweater” of women to talk to him, for M. Uzanne is one who does not mince matters.

Mentally I picture him making his investigations, pre-

paratory to writing his book. I wonder if the pedlar-woman, the early bread-bringer, the street-sweeper, the cheesemonger—delightful person that she must be—the wretched prowler about the fortifications, the theatrical star, the *bas-blou* (how he loathes us of the Minor Pen), the mannequin, the butcher's cashier, the great lady, whom I like the least of all his types—I wonder whether any one of them suspected that she was being interviewed. I imagine not.

Sly M. Uzanne, talking with grave courtesy to these ladies, learning their wages, their salaries, their manners and customs, their favourite authors, their *théâtre de prédilection* !

He must have loved writing the exquisite little monographs in Chapter VIII. as one loves reading them. Each is a jewel in itself.

Does not one long to know the fried-potato woman, seriously suspected of employing in her art dog's fat instead of lard ? And the demure dame of a certain age who sells newspapers in a kiosk ? It is delightful to know that she reads as well as sells her newspapers, and I for one get real satisfaction in thinking of her palpitating interest in the *feuilleton* about the poisoning duchess. We in England don't dare write about poisoning duchesses.

I wish we did.

The lady of the *charcuterie*, too, who tosses her paper-thin slices of ham into the scales, "not without a certain coquetry"—

All these are enchanting people, with whom one fain would linger. Charles Dickens would have loved Chapter VIII. But M. Uzanne has other things for us to learn ; dreadful things that make us sad.

The drinking, cursing, quarrelling washerwoman of the Seine, with her rheumatism and her three or four francs a day, is not comfortable to contemplate, but she is, in her robust, militant misery, far from being the most pitiable of the women of Paris.

The factory girls earning under two shillings a day, and spending most of it on drink ; the decent little sempstress who earns no more, who, M. Uzanne tells us (and I am convinced that he is right), " is usually plain," and (now speaks the poet) "*of whom the children in the house are afraid*" ; the naughty but often pretty ironer, who has pretty hands, but who, like the factory girls, spends the greater part of her earnings in " rinsing her tile," and who, after forty, disappears no one knows whither ; these, and those others gravely explained as " those outside the moral laws," what we learn of them is much sadder.

For the poor, sodden, hopeless, fat creatures of the very lowest class M. Uzanne has only pity, and this although fat women fill his soul with a loathing that fringes on hatred.

For the outcast he blames Man. But for the pretty, successful *hétaire*, with a well-developed business-sense, he has no mercy. It is plain that this wise man almost expects woman to be weak, but that mercenary she cannot be without being lashed by his indignant scorn.

The chapter on artists is perfectly enchanting.

We all know that there has never been a great creative artist among women ; we all realise that whatever George Sand and Rosa Bonheur may be, compared to the rest of us, they are not even second-rate compared to the greatest men of their two arts ; this we all know, but M. Uzanne's attitude towards the feminine artist is delightfully summary. So long, he thinks, as woman refrains from unsexing herself by acquiring genius, let her dabble in anything. The woman of genius not only does not exist, but *when she does she is a man.*

The beauty of this theory will be a joy to every one.

As to the frankly third-rate she-dabbler in any of the arts, let her dabble, bless her little heart. It will amuse her, keep her out of mischief, and even help the development of her soul, as the contemplation of the beautiful always does.

*But* (and how heartily many will agree with him !) let her not exhibit. The pursuit of an art must by most women be treated more or less as a vice. It must be hidden. Yes, let her dabble with all her might, but in God's name let her show the results of her dabbling only to her patient though afflicted family. This bears reflection, at least, and even to the militant women of England may prove an idea of value.

M. Uzanne is so extremely convincing that one resents his casting a doubt on the former existence of the *grisette*.

Why can she not have lived, as well as live now the

adorable *midinettes* and *trottins* whom he loves, and whom he makes us love ?

Perhaps Mürger, if we could ask him, would doubt the existence of these last. . . .

When one has finished the book and laid it aside, and thinks about it, it is not the individual details, delightful reading though they make, that occupy one's mind.

It is a kind of composite picture, cloudlike and shifting, but not evanescent, of what M. Uzanne himself feels and hopes about women.

He believes, one knows, in the old-fashioned education for girls, modified somewhat by modernity ; one knows that he believes in the spirit of Christ, "the first generous socialist" ; he believes in goodness, in gentleness, in purity.

Behind the rice-powder he sees the soul.

And he wants, for the women he understands so kindly, fair-play and gentleness.

He wants those who must work to be humanely treated and adequately paid.

He wants those who are sick to be tended not by husband-hunting mercenaries, but by those tender-hearted women who love their kind, and believe in a future life, and who, alas, are being hounded out of the country they in their way served quite as well as the men who fight for her.

He does not, I am sure, wish women to vote, but he wants men to help them take care of themselves.

Surely this is wisdom ?

And above all he wants women to be happy.

Now there are of course many differences between Frenchwomen and Anglo-Saxon women ; and yet, as Kipling says, we are all sisters under our skin.

So it seems to me that in writing this very masterly book about the women of Paris M. Uzanne has also written about the rest of us.

Perhaps he does not know this, but I believe it to be so.

And one thing for which the more vociferous of us are clamouring being Justice, this book ought to mean much to us all—all those of us who wear clothes.

For it is the able exposition of the theories of a man who, even when we amuse, enrage, or disgust him, is to all women perfectly just.

What more can be said ?

BETTINA VON HUTTEN

SCHLOSS STEINBACH

BAVARIA





## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

### THE MOTIVE AND OBJECT OF THIS BOOK

ON the threshold of this gallery of analytical sketches of the modern Parisian woman, it seems hardly necessary to make any apology for its presentation, as there is nothing specially new in its conception. It does no more, indeed, than trace within the limits set by its particular subject the *Tableau de Paris*, which has already been drawn, but which needs to be brought up to date every fifty years.

Since the appearance of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, however, no one seems to have thought of rehandling a topic which has been so long out of fashion, or of giving a series of lifelike sketches of contemporary men and women in their different surroundings and conditions. It cannot be said that our modern society, with its constant transformations and its curious and unexpected symptoms of fresh development, is not sufficiently interesting. Society is to-day undergoing changes governed by the development of politics, influenced by Socialism and, above all, by the discoveries of science, which is now so formidably equipped. It is infinitely more complicated, more difficult, and consequently more interesting, to present in a series of portraits than was that of our peaceful and simple ancestors in 1840.

But however interesting it would be to make a physiological survey of our contemporaries, who are much more astonishing people than they appear on the surface, we cannot undertake in these days, when long books are frowned upon, a task so enormous. At the same time,

after some study of feminine fashions and manners in France for some centuries back, and more particularly since the year 1800, it appears to us that it might be interesting, and not out of place, to give in a series of short chapters, within the compass of a single volume, a summary account of the leading types of the Parisienne of all classes as she exists at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It has been no part of our plan to produce a revised version of the realistic and highly coloured monographs of Restif de la Bretonne. His method does not agree with the taste of the present day, which is all for rapid sketches, personally observed, rather than scientifically verified. We have therefore tried to catch the principal feminine types as they pass in procession before us, taking of each a slight sketch *en silhouette*, or, as our photographic slang has it, a "snapshot."

L- We hope that this series of sociological studies from the life, which have been rapidly drawn and have not been retouched, will produce precisely the effect which was intended, and will bring before the reader the mind and character, the dress and manners, the poses, attitudes, the various modes of speech—in a word, the distinctive traits, good or bad, of the modern woman as she presents herself at the present day in the French capital, in a setting which is picturesque enough, had we only eyes to see it.

For the rest we have not followed the fashion of the day in procuring a preface by some notable literary man for the moment in fashion; but as there is nothing new under the sun, it has occurred to us that Sébastien Mercier would discharge the task of introducing this book as well as anybody. One hundred and thirty years ago, in the opening chapter of his *Tableau de Paris en 1780*, he sketched the programme of the present volume so accurately that scarcely a line need be altered. It is as follows:

"We have drawn this *Tableau* from the life. We have

had enough pleasing pictures of the past. We have confined ourselves to the present generation and to the characters of our own time, because to us it is infinitely more interesting than the uncertain history of the Phœnicians and the Egyptians. Our own surroundings have a special claim on our attention. We should live among our fellows, rather than wander abroad to Sparta, Rome, or Athens. Our contemporary, our fellow-countrywoman, is the unfamiliar creature whom it is our special duty to know; for we are necessarily in touch with her, and therefore every aspect of her character becomes of infinite importance. If at the end of every century a sagacious writer had set down a general description of what he saw around him, if he had depicted the manners and customs of the day, we should now possess a curious collection of human documents; we should know a thousand things of which we are ignorant. It is even possible that our morals and our laws would be the gainers. But, as a rule, men are foolish enough to despise what is before their eyes: they reach back to former centuries; they long for a knowledge of useless facts and forgotten customs, and spend their time in interminable discussions from which no satisfactory results can be obtained. We venture to think that in a hundred years and more, our work, which deals with contemporaries, will be referred to, not on account of its merits, but because the observations we have made will naturally link themselves with those which will be made by the succeeding generations, who will profit both by our folly and by our wisdom. A knowledge of the men and women among whom he lives will always be essential to any writer who desires to give utterance to a few salutary truths proper to correct the errors of the day; and this, we may remark, is the only merit to which we can lay claim.

“If, in searching for material for our picture, we have discovered hideous poverty within the walls of the capital

more often than decent comfort ; if we have found sorrow and anxiety rather than the placid gaiety usually attributed to the people of Paris, the fault is not ours ; our interpretation is, before all things, a faithful one.

"It has been said that happiness is only a question of comparison ; and if this is true, we must admit that it is almost impossible to be happy in Paris, because the insolent luxury of the rich is everywhere paraded before the eyes of the poor. Are you of a middling station ? In any other place you will be comfortable ; in Paris you will be poor. In the capital, passions are aroused which exist nowhere else. Nothing so much excites the desire for pleasure as the sight of the pleasures of others. The actors playing their parts in this great and ever-changing scene compel you to become an actor yourself. You have no longer any peace. Your desires become overpowering, superfluities become necessities, and the desires which you have by nature are infinitely less tyrannical than those inspired by the customs and opinions of those around you."

Thus wrote Sébastien Mercier with surprising prevision of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. This extract from his preface to the *Tableau de Paris*, which has been very slightly modified, is almost perfectly adapted to our own volume. What he has said could not be better said to-day ; nor could we have a better exposition of social conditions as they exist at this very hour in the first phase of the twentieth century.

Like Mercier, we must confess that in our desire for accuracy in describing the Parisian women of the present day we have felt it to be our duty not to write an elegant and charming book dealing exclusively with the pleasant side of life—one of those pretty drawing-room books, full of a graceful and smiling optimism, which makes use of every form of complacent euphemism so as to hurt no prejudices or raise any irritating social questions. In

spite of its feminine subject, this book will not confine itself to peaceful expressions or pretty scenes. Dr. Pangloss's philosophy is not ours. On the contrary, we have rubbed shoulders with more poverty than wealth, and in the streets we have seen more vice than virtue; and for this reason perhaps many of our readers will be shocked. They will, no doubt, accuse us of taking pleasure in writing at unnecessary length on what is repulsive, in the depressing chapters on prostitution, which of necessity has such a terribly important place in the life of the capital. Moreover, the descriptions in this book of a type of woman who has already made her appearance in novels and modern plays, and who even attracts the upper classes to café-concerts, will probably also be found offensive. We mean those degraded prostitutes known and celebrated as *gigolettes*, of whose character and occupation we have given a by no means flattering picture.

However light and superficial in appearance are the short studies which will be found in the following pages, we can assure our readers that we have exaggerated nothing, and that if the sadness incident to the conditions of all classes of workwomen depresses the reader, it has also depressed the writer, to the point of insisting on some social changes in favour of the worker. We are not behind-hand in the ideas of reform as to working-women's wages sketched in these chapters. No one can pretend that our society is based on fair and equitable laws. Its sole title to honour (as Balzac has already observed) is that of having created *woman* where Nature had only made a *female*; in having created the perpetuity of desire, where Nature had designed merely the perpetuity of the species—in a word, in having invented *love*, the most beautiful religion of humanity. But this title to honour might well be brought as a reproach against us; for if the several creative social activities have produced an apotheosis of woman in the higher spheres, where she is independent

of work, they have, on the other hand, embittered and increased the moral distress of those unhappy beings at the foot of the social ladder—those who know nothing of the infinite delicacy of love, and are forced to the degradation of submitting passively to brutal desire.

Our society is like a human bazaar where egoism is the current means of exchange. Virtue has only a relative value when it is not supported either by beauty or by fortune. Man, who exploits the social ego for the benefit of his pride, his self-love, and his vanity, is eternally to blame for the injustice which is suffered by the fallen woman. We have in no way tried to blacken the picture, but to hold up the mirror of truth to his conscience. If our modern women are not angels, it is for you, my brother, to cry "*Mea culpa!*" Clear your mind of cant. Look at the work of degradation and debasement which you have done and confess that it is yours!

The paradise of Paris, that paradise so much celebrated, envied, admired, and coveted by our own provinces and by the whole world, is a deceptive mirage for those unfortunate creatures without means who have to live there, or rather who have somehow to keep themselves from starvation. Instead of a paradise, they find a delusively beautiful entrance to a hell terrible beyond imagination—a hell of daily poverty, of unending labour, of perpetual privations, of abnegations, of renouncement of all healthy, hygienic and natural conditions of life; a hell where smiles hide heartbreaking despair, where the art of keeping up appearances conceals under a semblance of neatness and prosperity the most pitiable poverty and the most degrading self-surrenders. Paris, for the majority of Parisians who live and die in its luxury, its gaiety, its noise, its feverish ambitions, is a fearful prison of pleasure, of desires, of artificial intoxication, of all kinds of social and worldly vanities, where dissipation, prodigality, excess, and debauchery make up the penal servitude

enforced on its inhabitants. It has been said of the Parisian woman that she has the *beauté du diable* ; but it has not been said that she has also the characteristics of the damned, of the tortured but heroic victims of the self-indulgence of others, of the capricious pleasure and vanity of men. In the following study of the Parisienne in her various surroundings, ~~stations, and conditions~~, we shall be able to observe her struggle against countless difficulties, her strength so often rising superior to her weakness ; her hidden life in this hell which wears the outward appearance of a Garden of Eden but is nevertheless, for her, a Garden of Torture.





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## CHAPTER I

### THE MODERN PARISIAN WOMAN

*General observations : Aphorisms on the Parisienne : Her social rôle in the city : Her condition of mind : Her virtues superior to her virtue : Physiological and psychological notes*

A DESCRIPTION of the Parisian woman is a description of every Frenchwoman. In her character, mind, and taste the Parisienne is a national type. Moreover, you cannot analyse her without paying a tribute to the fair foreigners of both worlds who have colonised our city, the city which is the home of grace, pleasure, and art, the home also of charity and devotion to the terrible poverty underlying its wealth and luxury.

#### APHORISMS

Scarcely a third of the women in Paris are Parisiennes by right of birth.

A woman may be Parisian by taste and instinct anywhere on French soil, and indeed in any town or country in the world.

There are many cosmopolitan Parisiennes. They export a certain style, manner of language, dress and character the source of which is unmistakable.

Paris may be said to complete rather than to create the Parisienne; the air of the capital develops all beautiful forms whether of the mind or the body. It refines, polishes, beautifies, and spiritualises everything that undergoes

## THE MODERN PARISIENNE

the influence of its charm, which is at once a sting and a caress.

In every class of society a woman is a hundred times more feminine in Paris than in any other city of the world.

She is more feminine there, not because she is saner, better balanced, wiser or more attached to her duties and the laws of nature—on the contrary; but because Paris gives her in a high degree the attractiveness, the delicacy, the coquetry, the magic seductiveness of certain hothouse flowers, specially cultivated for our hours of pleasure.

The Parisienne is adorably feminine; the gamesome manner, which is her chief weapon—her carriage, her behaviour, her smile, her chatter—all these have a wonderful harmony and precision: they are all the expression of a perfect art, without affectation. In our country at the present time all that seemed permanent is uncertain; the future is full of vague anxieties, and while Paris, given up to the spoilers, seems each day to lose another star from her sovereign crown, woman alone proudly retains her precedence, her undisputed supremacy.

Perhaps on some distant day this siren may be able to save and reinstate the proud *nec mergitur* in the motto of our city; when, giving the lie to our device, we are at the point of being submerged in a final decadence.

Parisian women are the Sultanas of the West. Shopkeepers, workgirls, bourgeois, actresses, courtesans, and society women pass quickly, lightly, radiantly before the eyes of their admirers, like houris in Mohammed's heaven, shedding an intoxicating charm about them.

They are not faultlessly beautiful. The lines of classic beauty are by no means always followed in the Parisian type, but they possess something better than beauty, their faces have charming irregularities which boldly appeal to the critic's ideals, and one might say that the special characteristic of their charm is that it never wearies the taste of

those lovers of the sex who, like Montaigne, adore Paris even in her imperfections.

Parisian women form an aristocracy amongst the women of the world. To whatever class they belong they hardly ever bear the stamp of the proletariat. Moreover, they are seldom born in the bourgeois class; they are there generally by force of circumstances, or by marriage.

By exception, however, there are Parisian provincials, just as there are provincial Parisians, but these are mostly stay-at-home women, who are not seen outside their own neighbourhood.

It would be absurd to say, with some old-fashioned physiologists, that this sensitive being thrills to the touch like an æolian harp, or that she is the personification of the Graces, but it may be affirmed without exaggeration that no other woman can walk so well through the streets, or spring so lightly along a country road, and no other has such gracious ways in her modest home, such a delightful welcome to her "pot-luck." No other chatters so gaily, so tactfully. It is for this reason that whenever one meets a Parisienne she charms the eyes, the mind, and the heart by some undefined gentleness and grace, which leaves a sensation both very pleasant and rather intoxicating.

More volumes, large and small, of thoughts, paradoxes, aphorisms, and dissertations on the Parisienne have been written than on any other woman, but in spite of all the sympathetic, critical, and satirical things that have been already said about this capricious creature, our modern woman, as we see her surrounded by the corruption, doubt, and neurosis of the present day, has not yet found her historian. An impartial history would indeed be a desperate task to undertake.

In Paris, thanks to the women, the streets become, to an artist's and lover's eye, a fairyland of desire, of startling sensations of admiration, of strange adventure. The man



who understands this fairyland can enjoy it at any age, by only observing, admiring, and listening to scraps of conversation, as he passes the pretty fairies in the street, with their bright eyes and their little irregular features. In the spirit he sings perpetual passionate serenades to these charming daughters of Eve, whom he will probably never know, and his heart will respond to their charms long past the curfew bell and twilight of old age.

The Parisienne is an all-powerful enchantress : she is, so to speak, the motive power of the great factory whose humming wheels are human brains. Indirectly all duties and interests in the great daily battle come back to her. The results hardly won by struggle, or by the force of will, fame, honour, wealth, are so many trophies laid at her feet. It is she who is the instigator of ambitions and the source of fortunes, and, like the queen bee, she rules, guides, and stimulates activity in her immense and busy hive.

Bonaparte said, "A beautiful woman pleases the eye, a cheerful woman the mind, a good woman the heart." Whatever people may say, the Parisienne very often unites these three sovereign qualities. Her beauty, or let us say her charm, is quite sufficient to awaken passion ; her gaiety, rarely vulgar and always expressive, is the flower and perfume of moral health ; her natural, disinterested and profound goodness expresses itself in tender devotion, heroic actions, and noble service.

Some foreign writer in speaking of the Parisienne was pleased to say, "She is an adorable mistress, an impossible wife, and a perfect friend."

She is supreme in the first relation, for to whatever rank she belongs she has all the love-notes in her register. She is like a cat in her soft ways and childish fancies, a cat in her sudden treacheries, the quick use of her claws, her fits of pouting at the fireside. Her caprices, her pranks, her whims shown to those who desire her and to whom her heart is indifferent, make of her an almost unattainable

possession whom only the chosen master, the conquering knight, can subdue and worship at his will. Such a mistress keeps her lover perpetually young, for her childish gaiety, her rebellious grace, and her spirit of comedy are unequaled. She has only one enemy, the fool ; one antipathy, the bore.

The Parisienne has set back the limits of age. She reigns until she is fifty. At twenty she allows herself to be loved, at thirty she loves also, at forty she understands what love is and analyses, studies, and professes it with feverish ardour.

The Parisienne of the twentieth century, now entering its second lustre, formed in manners by successive revolutions, and brought into contact, by means of travel, with women of foreign countries, is very different from the type our ancestors painted in the interesting series of portraits from the eighteenth century up to 1850. In spite of some general characteristics which she has not absolutely lost, we find hardly anything remaining of the original features. The lines drawn by Restif de la Bretonne, Sébastien Mercier, Balzac, Gozlan, Alfred de Musset, Nestor Roqueplan, Arsène Houssaye, Delvau, or Daudet, and so many others, are like the reflections in old scratched mirrors, in which the ladies of to-day would fail to recognise their own images. Ideas, artistic style, manners, gestures, carriage, all have changed. The Parisienne of to-day presents an absolutely distinct type. She exhibits in her active life an artistic self-expression, a sense of vigour, a cosmopolitan veneer, a sort of boyish bravado, a kind of pseudo-English smartness, which is entirely new.

She has become in some sort a collector, a searcher after curiosities, a lover of art and beautiful things. In closer touch with art and literature, her taste has been educated, her mind formed ; and her knowledge is framed not, as used to be the case, on the things of which she is ignorant, but on what she really knows and possesses.

There are no defects in the home surroundings which the lady of society chooses to set off her elegance and beauty. She is to be found there in exquisitely vaporous undress, in charming satin or Japanese *crêpe* tea-gowns, or Indian silk or Oriental velvet on which are embroidered processions of birds or fantastic dragons. She has rediscovered the art of drapery, of arranging materials of harmonious folds, and sometimes delights to wrap herself in clinging gauzy stuffs like the delicious Tanagra statuettes.

She is more occupied than ever in the care of her complexion; she has almost a mania for lingerie, and in her scrupulous love of personal cleanliness has become attractive and irreproachable to a degree unknown to her grandmother.

At the same time, the Parisienne of to-day cannot altogether repudiate the laws of heredity. She carries with her a psychological medley of the virtues and vices of the four or five preceding generations. A careful study of her tastes and her temperament clearly reveals traces of her French and foreign ancestors which would justify a fantastic philosopher, called upon to try her for the frivolity and moral insensibility with which she is so often reproached, in bringing in a verdict of irresponsibility.

Is the Parisienne, whom we have sketched as by common consent the most exquisite creature in the world, also the happiest? This is a difficult question, and the majority of answers would perhaps be in the negative. He who wrote, "Woman is the paradise of Paris, but the paradise is not theirs," had good reason for his opinion. It is indeed true that most of them have bought the right to live in a city full of injustice and bitterness for so many that it shelters at a heavy price—the price of labour, sorrow, and difficulty.

These dear women have power over our desires, our passions, our vices, but they are in most cases superior to the conduct they inspire, and the goddesses to whom we burn incense, the pretty girls we desire and pretend to

crown as queens, are too often, alas ! only our victims, our slaves, and the captives of our imperious pleasures.

Whether we consider the Parisienne in society, or in the *demi-monde*, as a legitimate wife or a mistress, is she not, after all, nearly always the plaything of our vanity, our position, our egotism, our wantonness ?

Can we be said to protect these women whom in their youth we oppress with our desires, and to whom we refuse the safeguard of our laws, the support of a strong morality, and the means of livelihood apart from ourselves ? Have we not made of this paradise of Paris a kind of infernal seraglio, where beauty and the freshness of youth are incessantly pursued by crowds of men who have no other aim than the ruin of virginity and innocence ? Have we by our forethought or charity provided any honourable refuge for virtue too often at odds with poverty ? At odds also with those loathsome jackals ever on the search for beauty in distress.

"Paris is a monster," wrote Balzac ; "evil spreads round it, and ravages the entire country. The nation is divided into fifty small states ; each one has its own physiognomy, and women reflect the light of the sphere in which they shine. As in all countries with one capital, the degeneration of morals is the necessary consequence of centralisation." The moral cowardice of man, who believes himself the most polite and chivalrous being in the world, was bound to create this condition of the laws, which delivers over to his idle caprice, his brutal instincts, and his corrupt influence all women without employment, without means or dowry. This famous society, whose refinement of civilisation is so much vaunted, and whose inconsistencies strike other nations called barbarous, is proud of herself, sure of her power. She considers herself virtuous, having ordered all things according to her monstrous egotism ; at the same time she seems to say to women, "You will be rich either as a slave or a courtesan. You cannot and must not escape

from this dilemma. To men we offer remunerative employment, however futile or unbecoming to their manhood ; to you, in spite of the hard-won results and triumphs of feminine emancipation, we can only give hard and unproductive situations, those refused by men, and which will barely earn for you your daily bread. If you are rich all doors will be open to you, and even if you are ugly, stupid, devoid of all attractive qualities, some man will welcome you, thanks to your money, and condescend to give you a name and a social position ; you will sell yourself to him and will be respected and congratulated by every one.

“ If you are poor we will have none of you. The morality of Christ is not ours. We will give you neither opportunities for work, nor protection, nor help. Be a slave ; that is, either a poor man’s wife, if any one loves you enough, or is brave enough to take charge of you, or else work ceaselessly—sew, embroider, wear out your life for ten, fifteen, twenty hours a day for an infinitesimal wage, which will barely support you, and if you should raise your hands in supplication to your fellow-men or show any want of resignation, we will turn away and deliver you up to the connoisseurs of virginity, to the devourers of youth, to those on the quest for untried possibilities of pleasure. You must either sell or give yourself ; and if, after you have made the sacrifice, you are deceived, abandoned, thrown into the street, that does not concern us. Go to some one else ; we can do nothing for you. France is jealous and proud of the blood of her sons, but she cares not a fig for the honour or integrity of her daughters. If you have children we will not search for their father ; you must bring them up yourself, if you can. Our democracy is based on the famous Rights of Man. As to the woman, that feeble, delicate, suffering creature, we will let her go with the stream, bruised, wandering, unsteady, overcome by the impossibility of living. If he who finds her strikes and wounds her still more, we will shut our eyes.”

Such is the truth and has been so for centuries, but we try to forget it and agitate for further claims in favour of men. France, a chivalrous country, polished, gallant, gay and happy, light-hearted rather than good-hearted, has not yet had time to recognise that, up till now, she has been incredibly cowardly towards women, and has behaved either with blind selfishness or unspeakable cynicism.

Parisian women are very much like stage queens ; many earn their royalty by terrible privations and sordid poverty. Thanks to their spirit, their sense of coquetry, and their happy carelessness, they are able to hide under a graceful appearance the terrible wounds they bear. In any case, if the morals of Paris are abominable, and if in the course of this book several chapters are devoted to prostitution, open or clandestine ; if, in a word, the harlot occupies too much space in these pages, we must ask for the indulgence of the reader on behalf of the many victims of our extravagant society, which is a very forcing-house for debauchery.

Paris, more perhaps than any other city in Europe or America, is unpropitious to the virtue of its poor inhabitants. Everything seems to conspire against them ; the blindness of the law and the want of police protection, as well as the universal love of amusements, frivolity, and desire for pleasure. One cannot attribute the relaxation of morals to the weaker sex, it is generally men who set the tone of morals. " The crowd has no other law but example," as Massillon splendidly remarked. Poor women in Paris, at least a large number of them, are therefore sacrificed to the modern Minotaur, and become victims of Don Juans of the baser sort, who make collections rather than selections. These disinherited ones are, therefore, all the more worthy of our attention and our pity.

Women in society are also the victims, in other ways, of our moral conditions. For nearly forty years a great change has been taking place in social customs, tending to a vague confusion between the *demi-monde* and the higher

classes. Women without morals, as has been remarked elsewhere, opened their Parliament about the middle of last century. Their world was recognised socially, and has come too near the world of good society. The left-hand queens elbowed those of the right hand, and the latter were brought unconsciously to imitate the manners, tone, and fashions of the former, and sometimes even to take a leaf out of their book. They have met secretly to exchange confidences about a husband or a lover, who formed a bond of union between them. They have considered each other in the light of rivals, placed themselves almost on a footing of equality, and met quite naturally at charity bazaars, races, and hotel tea-parties. They have employed the same dressmaker and milliner, and vied with each other in matters of grace and style.

At the present time when a woman of the *demi-monde* is well launched and high priced, when she has a good establishment and her house is noted for its taste or magnificence, there is no woman in society calling herself "smart" who has not a complete knowledge of her clothes, her style, her lovers, and her stables. A woman of the world must, nowadays, have the great and small *demi-monde* at her finger-ends.

This *demi-monde*, which will fill many pages later on, has inevitably become a little kingdom by itself in the great city, including within it the most varied castes and the strangest of aristocracies. There is the sporting *demi-monde*, the dramatic, the artistic, the political, and amongst its members, who are often more rigid than the world whose manners they ape and exaggerate, are women of great influence, of great powers of attraction, and of great wit. You find a little of everything. Those who voluntarily lead an irregular life, those who rebel against conventions, independent members of honourable families, widows not yet tired of the world, are perhaps as numerous there as poor and uneducated girls who have fallen.

In consequence of this new and easy view of morality, which results from an open and willing abandonment of the rule of monogamy, adultery in fashionable society sometimes assumes almost an official character. Either the wife is indifferent to her husband's infidelities, to such an extent that she does not even interest herself in them ; or he, from a desire to behave correctly, shows no curiosity about his wife's illicit relations ; or again, they come to a sort of compromise to secure their respective liberty, and live in a tolerant comradeship, in which neither hides anything from the other, and each is willing to avow the violations of the contract binding them together.

What must be concluded if not that the woman in society, independent as a result of the confusion of classes, forced into compliance, into giving up her dignity and her conscience, is carried away, often without her desire, by the force of current morality, which often leads her much farther than she means to go ?

Some think that conjugal restrictions and neo-Malthusianism are the causes of all this, and cry out with the moralists of twenty years ago, "Hearths without fires, hives without bees, houses without children !" I think, on the other hand, that the moral isolation of the woman in Paris, the uncertainty of love, the mediocrity of the legitimate lover, the entire want of home intimacy, are the real sources of the evil.

The greater number of these society women, in flaunting vices they are not guilty of, in affecting a false perversity which has not the excuse of an overmastering temperament, remain always misunderstood by the coarse men they meet, and are profoundly saddened by their empty trivial lives, seeking in vain for tender and sincere sentiment, instead of new, frenzied, and guilty sensations.

But they are also fearful of the fluent raillery of their friends who seek after novelties. They are willing enough to listen to the instinctive cry of their souls, but all round



them is the empty life of pleasure, and, not daring to revolt against social conditions, they condemn themselves to accept the general standard of morality without strength to make resistance. They go their way, smiling wanly, but so unhappy, so sad ! He who really loves them understands.

The Parisienne is a creature essentially made for love, by her tender and imaginative nature, her moral education, and by the atmosphere of admiration which surrounds her from her fifteenth year. She lives to the time of her marriage as a desired divinity, worshipped, idolised. Love has been represented to her as the romance, realisation of which is necessary to existence, but under the vigilance of her mother, without the freedom and the practicality of the English or American girl, without some of her knowledge perhaps, she expects, and hopes everything from her emancipation.

Hardly is she married when this love she has dreamed of, the love which was to paint in superb frescoes the grey walls of her life, is suddenly extinguished by a husband unworthy of his task, if not indifferent to the duty of educating her untried affections, and her ingenuous mind full of adorable curiosity.

The succeeding days she spends alone, or gives them up to society, to her girl friends, to family visits ; and while her new master is occupied by his business, his club, or by sport, this delicate, nervous girl, hoping for a little tender love-making, for some exquisite intimacy, is isolated, left alone with her bundle of half-discovered sensations, revolted by her disillusionment and already searching with the ardour of unsatisfied love for some affection in compensation, either natural or the reverse.

It is easy to understand, for this and twenty similar reasons, the origin of the almost daily scandals, the disquieting revelations in so many luxurious Parisian households. It is easy also to understand these impetuous attempts of the modern woman to escape from her icy-cold environment, from her home devoid of tenderness, and to discover

elsewhere some possibilities, some relief from her weariness, even in an artificial love.

In a town where everything is an appeal to the senses, where everything feeds her nervous excitement, where books, pictures, theatres, conversations incessantly remind her of love, of devouring passions, or the attractive perversity of mysterious debauch, the woman who has neither the refuge of maternity or of a profound devotion, is very ready to fall. The moralist who throws the first stone at her is a fool, either thoughtless or blind, for men and society are responsible for this distress and abandonment.

One must not, however, make the picture too black, nor attribute to the Parisienne in general what has grown to be considered as innate immorality. Paris, the home of vice, is also the sanctuary of the highest hidden virtues. Good women are still in the majority, a noble and silent majority which does not advertise itself or try to attract attention. The pavement is full of loose women and charlatans, but the wise men, the good, the modest who scorn notoriety, the workers and the men of science, all those who make up the real glory of Paris, hide themselves and pass unnoticed in the crowd. They do not figure in the newspapers, and have not stooped to the prostitution of publicity. And the good women, admirable mothers, faultless wives, women who passionately love men worthy of them, these stay quietly in the peace of their homes dreading the tumult outside. For one Parisienne who is the subject of scandalous gossip there are twenty who lead quiet lives at home, ready with pity and even excuses for the others.

We shall meet them again later on, and, in the meantime, we shall pass in rapid review many types of the modern Parisienne, especially the most picturesque, those whose work makes them conspicuous, or whose characters engage attention, or whose supreme art of coquetry compels us to stop and examine.

It is for this reason that, in this opening chapter, we have

been drawn into this vague psycho-physiological dissertation, which shows perhaps too much the spirit of the preacher or critic. This sudden access of misanthropy arises from a sincere admiration of the modern woman, who has unfortunately more disloyal servants of her vices than Don Quixotes to celebrate her virtues. Her virtues are many, and more admirable than her virtue in the singular. Those women who strictly practise virtue, in the narrow sense of the word, have often disgusted and discouraged the brave enthusiastic combatants for freedom, for its practice, unfortunately, does not always carry with it goodness, indulgence, and mercy—far from it.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NUDE IN MODERN LIFE

*Simple observations on the different representatives of the nude in art, and on their various expressions in modern times*

WOMAN is a protean creature. Her aspect alters before our very eyes according to the passion with which she inspires us. Like Proteus, she eludes the painter, but under whatever form she is represented, as Angel, Grace, Fury, Demon, Virgin, Goddess of Peace or War, Muse or Siren, Venus or Minerva, she remains eternally the same through all the variety of her transformations.

This living mystery, the source of man's life, the desire of his heart, the embodiment of his happiest aspirations, the enigma he studies with passion and abandons in despair, this Sphinx, dumb and insensible in proportion as her Œdipus is humble, devout and sincere, has always in some measure escaped the observation of the moralist, the brush of the painter, or the chisel of the sculptor. No one has yet contrived to give a close and concise rendering of this amazing microcosm, this mixture of modesty and sensual grace, chaste and perverse by turns. Women without number have been described and portrayed, but *Woman* has never been accurately represented. The model who distils passion through the surrounding air has always blinded the eyes fixed on her.

It would seem, too, as if woman has invented *fashion* for the express purpose of bewildering her chroniclers, and enveloping herself through the ages in continually varying

costumes, more or less deforming and unsightly to her admirers' eyes.

Even in the nude (a strange and disquieting fact), her body seems to change according to æsthetic standards, which are successively and regularly altered more than six times in a century.

The nude has, in fact, always been differently interpreted according to the varying conceptions of the ideal formed by the generations of artists which have succeeded each other in every country in the world from the earliest times.

In painting and sculpture the representations of the female nude correspond generally to the tastes, aspirations, manners, and literature of their epoch. The spirit of a period expresses itself in the art of that period even in the details of the modelling, which bear the impress of its particular ideas. As one century passes into another, the difference becomes obvious to the most untrained observer. The variation of a single generation is perceptible to all delicate and expert critics interested in the genesis of an æsthetic formula. The study of these fashions in idealism through successive schools of painting (if only since the Renaissance) would be an interesting subject for an expert critic, for the *History of the Nude in Art* has never yet been written.

What is the cause of the total change in the meaning of the nude in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and succeeding centuries? The mystical representations of the nude among the early masters, the virginal, calm, slender figures, enveloped in an atmosphere of immaterial spirituality, the nude, so to say, of the missal border, bears not the slightest resemblance to the profane and exuberant creations of the Renaissance.

The nude of Michelangelo, tremendous, extravagant, unrestrained, preternatural, is the dominant note in the scale of a unique idealism which united in a single harmony the creative visions of all the artists of his time. It was

the first conception of sensual nudity—of the immodest woman—which became much more pronounced under Veronese, Titian, Caracci, Rubens, and Jordaens.

In studying the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and following carefully the birth and evolution of the schools of painting and sculpture, we can see how, according to the laws of development, the representation of the nude is obedient to an influence which day by day excites, convulses, animates, and colours it, up to the time of the painters of the Regency, when this growing exaggeration was finally checked after having been already restrained by their predecessors, who, with the occasional exceptions of Lebrun, Coysevox, Puget, and Girardon, had occupied themselves but little with this branch of art.

The free and voluptuous, palpitating style of which Robert de Cotte, Lemoine, Watteau, Boucher, Baudoin, Fragonard, Vanloo, Falconet, Houdon, Bouchardon, and Clodion are the acknowledged masters, initiated a more graceful study of the nude, prettier, more wayward, more decadent, and, we may say, more Parisian. From these representations was developed a more animated, expressive, seductive school, gay and malicious, pink and white, dimpled, tender and soft, at once bold and shy, a sort of half-blown flower of nudity over which hovers the faint suggestion of a shiver. Nevertheless the roguish figures of the eighteenth century were more sympathetic because more Parisian, until the cold school of David extinguished them and made them dreary academic things like painted statues.

Twenty years later we find the nude of the Romantic Movement with a perfectly recognisable character of its own, conventional, affected, and self-conscious, not devoid of distinction but without any real vigour. This was the *néo-grec* style of Ingres, whose *Source* is like porcelain in its impeccable lines and enamelled surfaces. It was also the style of Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, and Déveria, who gave us splendid busts and loins, splendid dazzling shoulders,

exquisite studies of enchanting necks, and incomparable subtlety in the lines of the back. But, after all, the romantic nude, adequate as it was to the literature of the day, has not preserved for posterity the *diablerie*, the bravado, the astounding truculence of which the artists of that generation believed that they had the monopoly. It was a purely transitional style, emptier and more enervating even than it appeared, and was to culminate in the frigid and pompous works of Bouguereau, Gérôme, Lefèvre, Carolus Duran and so many other Academicians who had happily no great influence over their pupils, the real creators of the modern, living, vigorous school.

The modern nude, as Heine would have said, has broken with the tradition of an impassive and chaste idealism. Following Félicien Rops and Rodin, a "sensualist" movement arose, about twenty-five or thirty years ago, which to-day has almost reached its climax. Art and literature have never before been so profoundly absorbed by the consideration of woman as at this present day, with the culture of her body, the study of her nerves, of her caprices, her desires. Woman does not only inspire the artist of to-day: she dominates him. She is no longer merely the Muse, she is the Succubus. She has ceased to pose with a halo of splendour and perfection; rather she invites her votaries to an orgy of the senses; she lives and palpitates as if possessed with a demon of luxury. This modern nude figure peeps at us everywhere, her leg marked at the knee by the sharp contrast of the black stocking fastened with the eccentric garter. In books, in newspapers, at the annual Salon she springs up; she announces herself in magazine illustrations and on posters.

Ernest Renan said, "The whole of nature is a great flower full of harmony; one cannot find a fault in the design." Painters and draughtsmen have understood this. They have invaded the classic temple and violated the unchanging idol of the ideal. They have believed that, at this epoch of

the complete study of woman, it was their duty to study the adorable human animal in its modern decadent refinement, in the prismatic colours of its flesh soiled as it is by poverty and by the disease of evil desires.

Giulio Romano, Carriaci, Carême, Monet, Eisen, Déveria, in their studies of eroticism never presented the nude with such a flavour of poisonous perversity, with such feverish abandonment expressed in exquisite and meticulous detail.

The modern expression of the nude in art pursues woman in all the details of her life, in her rising from sleep, her bath, her siestas on deeply cushioned sofas; it interprets her attitude as she kneels at prayer in the Madeleine, her poses before the glass, and all the perverse seduction of hysterical abandonment. The study of the nude in this contemporary development may be called pathological, as it pitilessly drags into the light all the disorders of the flesh, all the abortions of beauty, sometimes more interesting than beauty in its normal phases. It exhibits the bitterness of pleasure; gaiety is depicted far less often than the sharp anguish of decadent desire or the torpor following its satisfaction. It is no longer plastic poetry representing a creature in ecstasy; it is material intoxication in all its convulsions.

This species of representation is exhibited with effrontery in shop windows, it writhes on posters, it advertises its hysteria, its anæmia, its emaciated unhealthy lines, its prancing graces on all the public hoardings and in all the exhibitions of the day. It must be admitted that it has gone too far.

Is this form of art a symptom of our decadence? Perhaps, but in any case it proclaims our freedom from hypocrisy. Mystical symbolism, which claims to set up a kind of Renaissance of primitive ideas, cannot all at once return to chastity of form. Faith is not strong enough; and so even in the nimbus of a virgin, in the drawing of a saintly type, we catch a glimpse of an impure inclination to contemporary libertinisms. Art cannot make head against the



current leading to the inevitable whirlpool ; it can change only when it has touched the bottom of the abyss. We must admit that as it perishes it displays the extraordinary attractions of the damned. It goes its way shamelessly and vigorously. Its cynicism does not lack wit, and its anatomical deformities, inspired by the vices of its epoch, have their own ideal ; a low one, no doubt—hardly above the level of our eyes—but in truth much higher than the Academic ideals, the stiff and cold erotic figures of the Roman decadent.

## CHAPTER III

### DRESS IN PARIS

*Feminine coquetry : Extravagance of underclothing : The triumph of make-up : Our Parisienne's expenditure : Style and fashion*

IF William Blake, the apocalyptic English poet and designer, was right when he said, "The pride of the peacock is the glory of God," we may say in our turn that the adornment of woman is the glory of man.

Woman's pride and vanity in dress, arising from the desire of shining, of being desirable and sought after like some exquisite work of art, may be compared to the peacock's. They deck their heads with aigrettes and feathers, they carry fans after the fashion of Juno's famous bird, who (according to a spiteful mythological story) painted the hundred eyes of Argus on the royal bird's tail. M. Edmond Perrier remarked at an important meeting of the Academy of Science, in the Institute of Paris, that while the classical taste for adornment in women increases in our civilised countries, men's dress, in sharp contrast, becomes quieter and free from all ornament. Jewels, embroideries, velvet, and feathers have entirely vanished from masculine costume. The ordinary dress of a man is so much simplified that, to use a simile appropriate for a savant, on state occasions when he mixes with women, he looks like a humble grub crawling among the flowers.

This evolution is characteristic, as it separates the human being from the superior animals. It is exactly the opposite

of what has happened in the greater part of the animal kingdom. There the male is the favoured sex. Among insects and birds the male is marked by an orgy of colour in the wings and feathers, by luxuriance of form, of changing tints. Darwin, who described in his masterly way the pre-nuptial dances of game-fowls, the competition of song among nightingales, the proud displays of Eastern birds before their harem, says that nature, obeying the law of selection, leaves to the male sex the work of exhibiting its value, and to the female the more delicate task of choice, implying taste and appreciation of beauty and strength.

The modern man seems definitely to have renounced all taste for ornament since the end of the eighteenth century. It would seem that the conquests of the French Revolution have left the advantage to women, who have appropriated to themselves since that period all the luxury and elegance of dress.

Fashion is woman's literature. Dress is the expression of her personal style. By dress she conveys the outward expression of her taste, of her skill, and even of her æsthetic individuality. It is thus that she contrives to charm the eyes of her admirers with the special originality of which she is possessed. Dress is, therefore, for women, the highest of the arts, the art containing all the others. It is not only the expression of her characteristic style, as we have said, but it is her palette, her poem, her theatrical setting, her song of triumph.

It has been said of women that they are like coins, stamped with the image and superscription of love, which are useless when the stamp is effaced. Can we not imagine what care these living medals take of their surface, how they polish and keep them intact long after the day when nature begins to depreciate them?

In the days of her youth personal adornment leads the coquette from one conquest to another; at a riper age it helps her to retain her conquests, and, later still, it enables

her to interpret her past successes to a new generation, who, knowing nothing of her former beauty, can yet admire her unchangeable good taste and elegance.

Dress is often said to be a source of discord and ruin in a household, and Scarron's epigram is more than ever true, "Quand Madame les porte beaux, Monsieur les porte belles !" But this is an economic question, hardly in place here.

Paris is the capital of fashion, and every day from its headquarters issue the decrees of the sovereign. Parisiennes are compelled to pose as models to the universe, and to reclothe themselves at the beginning of each new season according to the caprice of her sumptuary laws.

The twentieth century is distinguished by the sobriety of costumes worn in the street, also by the discreet elegance of the evening dresses, worn over incomparably luxurious underclothing. Balzac wrote the following phrase, showing how little he understood modern ideas, "Toute notre société est dans la jupe ; ôtez la jupe à la femme, adieu la coquetterie ! plus de passions. Dans la jupe est la toute-puissance ; là où il n'y a que des pagnes, il n'y a pas d'amour." What a mistake ! If his words have any truth as a general proposition, it is certain that in the restricted sense of dress they are sheer heresy. We recognise the tone of the moralist of a past epoch who grew faint with rapture at the sight of a white stocking with green clocks. How far we have travelled from our good ancestors ! "Là où il n'y a que des pagnes, il n'y a pas d'amour." Just think of that ! And what of the Greek draperies of our Tanagra ladies ?

It is precisely on the sight of the "underneath" that love flourishes, and this present century can boast of having invented an exquisite, subtle, adorable art, the last mythological expression of woman. I mean the art of filmy, beautiful underclothing. Up till now woman had not brought her refinement to bear upon her most intimate

apparel. It required centuries to develop the delicate taste of these coverings of her modesty.

In the eighteenth century, the coquettes and most elegant ladies of fashion sacrificed everything to appearances, that is, to the outside. The most expensive dresses were lined with coarse linen or cotton seamed with great stitches, which must have scarred the flesh. Corsets were like steel cuirasses, and drawers were unknown. Chemises were made of dressed calico, without trimming. As to silk stockings, they were for long monopolised by men, who wore them with great ostentation.

Everything was for the outside. One may add that our great-grandmothers' personal cleanliness was of a doubtful quality, and it is not unreasonable to say, in spite of a possible wound to vanity, that the fashion for baths came into France with the Allies. Light and cleanliness of the body came from the North.

*Enfin parut l'Anglais nous initiant au tub.*

A chapter on the dressing-rooms of Parisiennes in those days would be difficult to write, but stimulating. One would discover the manners and customs at rising and retiring to rest of the heroine of *La Calprenède*, *Mme. de la Fayette*, the *Abbé Prevost*, *Casanova*, and *Restif de la Bretonne*, or the marchionesses and duchesses of *Balzac*. We should, I am sure, be terribly disillusioned.

*Restif de la Bretonne*, for example, in his work *Les Parisiennes*, spoke of cleanliness as it should be taught to young ladies, in an ideal *Lycée de Mœurs*, which he dreamed of founding. "A woman who wishes to be really clean," he said (more from conviction than from any hope of attention), "should imagine herself completely exposed to view. She should be clean for herself as much as for others. Her head, covered by fashion with powder and pomade should be brushed clean every day, her hair should fall gracefully, and not spoil her clothes, and make them unfit

to be seen, which sometimes happens when they are taken off. Her neck should symbolise the cleanliness of the rest of her person and her linen be the essential part of her clothing. Frequent baths are good for the health, even in winter ; water should be her element, and partial ablutions during the day, even the night, give her skin a pearly whiteness. She should not neglect to wash her feet, and she should have as a maxim, that the part of her clothing the most exposed to the dirt of the street should be the cleanest. Thus all her attire will bear that particular charm signifying that it covers an attractive body."

Was this programme of 1787 carried out by women of that time, or even of the early nineteenth century ? One may well doubt it. It is certain, however, that it triumphs in our modern society, a century after it was formulated. But before the Revolution Parisiennes certainly did not make a cult of water. If a picture were drawn of the manners of those times from authentic memoirs, our readers would probably feel nauseated. The nymphs of the Directory, the goddesses of the Consulate, the beautiful neo-Greeks of the First Empire, in spite of the inadequacy of their clothing, and constant exposure of their ankles, had no great desire to build temples to the Naiads, and the delicacy and cleanliness of these amazons of Hymen were on a level with that of their mates, the sons of Mars.

The luxury of underclothing is only about forty years old, at most. It has increased sensibly during the last twenty years, with the severity and simplicity of the outer garments. The English tailor-made style, producing a levelling effect on the exterior clothing, develops the beauty and elegance of the "underneath" in logical proportion—the one is a corollary of the other.

Since the year 1880, eccentricity has disappeared from fashion. Women of good style rightly affect for the street a modest and quiet dress of soft and dark materials, distinguished only by the impalpable elegance of cut imparted

by some *grand faiseur*. The great lady cannot hope to escape from a sort of democratic uniform, since costumes are turned out by the gross in the large shops, and bought by every one. She can only be distinguished from the crowd by the faultless cut of her gown, and the subtle difference of style at least six or ten months in advance of the cheap warehouses patronised by the bourgeoisie.

Pretty trimmings, frills, and lace, so charming to the feminine touch and sight, are, therefore, employed out of sight by the *lingères* and corset-makers, who know they cannot pay too much attention, or give too much time and labour, to the foamy textures and soft delicate silks they use. Valenciennes, Irish crochet, Mechlin, Chantilly, Point de Venise, trim the lingerie of our Aphrodites, garments so complicated, so beautiful and artistic that several volumes would hardly describe them.

The modern woman is in some degree like a book bound *à la Janséniste*, that is, with a plain undecorated cover, but inside the cover, delicately tooled with lovely or curious designs. The art of women's dress has never reached so high a standard, has never been so ingeniously conceived or so practically expressed as at the present moment. Through the various schools that have dominated the fashions in women's clothes, we have at last struggled out of a semi-barbarism insisting rigorously on exterior pomp and show, without any care for the little soft accompaniments for the enveloping of beauty. Bad taste reigned supreme during most of the last century. The First Empire brought in a Greek idealism which had its own grace and charm, but under the Restoration, and still more under the Second Empire, women were outrageously dressed. Now, thanks to the sober good taste of their street costumes and the exquisite refinement of their lingerie, one may hope that Parisiennes will improve more and more in taste, and that the future reserves for us some even more delightfully decadent surprises in the combination of outer and inner garments.

Moralists, who are certainly not *féministes*, and still less artists, are continually protesting against the scandalous luxury and cost of dress. They inveigh against the elaboration in the making of the underskirts, chemises, &c. ; but no one pays attention to these sophists now any more than in the past.

If a man has the right only to clothe himself, woman has the right to ornament, to embellish herself, and, in the natural adornment of her grace and beauty, to introduce a little brilliance into the dullness of our modern life. An easier and more indulgent morality would be more becoming in the philosophers of our time, who generally have some notion of political economy.

Feminine fashions play a great part in the commercial prosperity of Paris, and employ millions of people in a single year. To attack feminine finery would be to strike at our prosperity, and at the tradition of ascendancy established by Frenchwomen throughout the world. Commerce in Paris depending on expenditure on feminine attire has increased to such an extent during the last thirty years that an example may be interesting. Forty-five years ago, when the extravagance of the Imperial Court seemed to have reached its climax, the first dressmaking house in Paris had a turnover of four or five millions. At that time it was a figure unprecedented in the business of dress. To-day, similar firms can boast of twenty-five millions! The combined business done each year by dressmakers, bootmakers, glovemakers, hairdressers, jewellers, makers of underclothing, tailors, furriers, and perfumers, is reckoned at more than a thousand million francs, thanks to our Parisiennes and to the foreigners from all countries who deal in Paris.

Without any desire to undervalue the natural beauty of women in certain countries, one must admit that a very attractive characteristic of the Parisienne is her grasp of the artifices of the toilet—the powder, the Venetian dyes, the pencils for eyes and lips, the enamellings, and all the



other recipes for beauty. A man who has cultivated his senses of sight, smell, and touch must be attracted by these feminine "aids to beauty." Can he find any fault with the powder which seems to spiritualise the living creature, or the carmine which makes her lips so enticing and adds a note of Franz Hals to the pale face, or the pencil which lengthens or brightens the eye, or even the dye which gives to the hair a brilliance superior to nature, and adds touches like the gold of the autumnal sun? It would be a delightful task to compile a theory of the artifices of the toilet in the twentieth century, dedicated to a small number of feminine worshippers. Théophile Gautier wrote towards the end of his life the following lines: "Women have understood, with their rare feeling of harmony, that there is a dissonance between dress at its highest and the natural complexion. And just as skilful painters tone their treatment of drapery and flesh together by the use of a thin glaze, so women whiten their skins, which in the natural colour would look crude beside the silks, laces, and satins of their dress, giving unity of tone to the whole effect. By means of fine powder they take from the skin the crude shade of red which is an offence to our civilisation, as it suggests the predominance of the physical appetites over the intellectual instincts. Perhaps there is also a vague feeling of modesty in the desire of women to cover their necks, arms, and shoulders with a light veil of white dust which diminishes the effect of nudity by a partial elimination of the warm and seductive colour of life."

The fashion which leads women to a delicate painting of eyes, eyebrows, complexion, and hair, is eminently reasonable. Feminine beauty is nature's masterpiece, and it is the wisdom of art to enhance and perfect it. Women of classic times made constant use of these artifices. All the famous patricians whose names have come down to us from Roman times, and from Venice or Florence, were skilful in the art of cosmetics and all preparations for enhancing beauty,

and well knew how to add the final touches and high lights used by great painters in their most celebrated portraits.

But this is hardly the place for a detailed study of plastic art, and we will glance, before closing this chapter, at the various items of women's expenditure according to different conditions and means.

In a daily paper a journalist has very recently made a sort of calculation of the expenses, first, of a millionaire ; secondly, of a woman of ordinary but comfortable means ; thirdly, of a woman who is a clever manager ; fourthly, of one with only small means ; and by these calculations we may arrive at some idea of the enormous sums spent by the whole community. For the great lady he estimates the amount spent on dressmaker, tailor, milliner, hairdresser, at about 40,000 francs, not including the jeweller. As the expenditure of the two first examples would take too long to discuss in detail here, we will pass on to the clever manager of a small income who is the next characteristic type of the modern Parisian bourgeoisie.

"The clever woman," says our specialist, "decides to appear, and succeeds in appearing, to spend more than she has. It is a difficult problem to solve and one which takes nearly all her time, and much diplomacy.

"First she enlists the help of a few rich friends whom she accompanies to their dressmakers and milliners. She gets what she calls 'ideas' from them. These friends sometimes lend her models, which are copied by a little inexpensive dressmaker, or even by a maid, if she has one sufficiently clever. The clever maid, by the way, is even more necessary to her than to the fashionable lady. The skilful woman makes use of everything—and allows nothing to be wasted. Last year's ball-dress makes a beautiful underskirt for this year. All the laces and furs of the family are used by her. She goes to wholesale places where she buys everything at the lowest price. Besides her purchases in the wholesale houses (of which she keeps a list) she goes

to the sales in all the good shops. If her means allow her to employ a dressmaker, the choice takes long consideration. She prefers a forewoman from a great shop, who has lately gone into business on her own account, and whose prices are temptingly low. The gown made by her serves as a model for the maid or the little dressmaker. She cannot afford to buy anything of extravagant style, which quickly goes out of fashion. But she buys every two or three years a good fur coat of otter or astrakhan, which always looks its value. For the same reason she does not affect bright colours which 'date.' If her dress is black or of dark colour it is not noticed. You need a very extensive wardrobe if you go in for frocks of mauve or green.

"The clever woman's lingerie is mostly made in convents. Models bought from a large place of business are copied in religious houses at a low price. As she is obliged to simplify all her wardrobe, she cannot, of course, afford many fanciful objects such as tea-jackets, silk or lace stockings; one specimen of each must serve. Moreover, her linen will not be elaborately made, so that it may be washed cheaply."

The clever woman knows, however, that she cannot economise on her corsets, as no dress will look well over ill-fitting ones, and she does not hesitate to go to the best corset-maker in Paris.

The same applies to the bootmaker. Economies in shoes are false economies. If a woman attends to these details she always looks well. She also dresses her hair herself, choosing a style that is original, personal, and becoming.

Her perfumes are bought at sales in the large shops. Her family jewels (or those given her on her marriage) serve for great occasions, or she borrows if necessary from her mother or some other relation. As for other ornaments, she does without them, or waits for the New Year or her birthday.

This woman's expenditure may be on an average 9000 or 12,000 francs. To keep within this sum she must in some years make special outlays, and economise on others—her

linen, for example, which will last three or four years ; or another year she will buy a good coat or have her jewels reset. The year after she has bought a number of gowns she will make up for it by special economies.

In Paris the number of these resourceful women is legion. There are also many women who have not sufficient means even for these small expenditures ; these are compelled to practise a more stringent form of economy aided by a sort of genius peculiar to Parisiennes.

For them a sum of 1800 or 2000 francs a year is sufficient. They cannot afford either a dressmaker or a milliner. Their gowns are made at home by a needlewoman who comes in for the day. A clever maid is not to be thought of in these modest households. Their hats they make themselves or buy at very modest shops, never going beyond forty or fifty francs. Their linen is bought at the sales of the large shops, and only at the last extremity. Their corsets are lined with cotton. They are never able to indulge in anything fanciful, and much calculation and intelligence is needed in all their purchases. It would be interesting to know whether the woman who never counts the cost of anything is happier than she who is reduced to economise even on pieces of ribbon.

There are always compensations, and one often thinks that it is perhaps not the *blasée* spendthrifts who are the most charming and attractive among our modern women. Often the smart little bourgeoisie, "logeant à l'hôtel de l'impécuniosité," (we quote from a *précieuse* of the seventeenth century), can express better than the finest of our fine ladies the grace of the true Parisian toilet.

Balzac wrote, "There is a certain movement of the skirt which deserves the Monthyon prize." Is it amongst the most fashionable that this particular grace is to be found ? Not necessarily. The touch of the true artist which produces the harmony of movement worthy of the prize of virtue will often come from an *élégante* of very modest means.

At the present day, the more expensive the gown, the more loaded with embroidery, trimmings, and ornaments, the less becoming it is. Women decorated like shrines are apt to be heavy, massive, and without any beauty of line—grace is killed by ostentation.

A woman who is well-proportioned and slender, and has an instinctive taste for dress, even though she is poor, will look a thousand times more attractive than a stout woman in the most sumptuous clothes. As Charles Blanc remarked in his book, *l'Art dans la Parure*, it is some consolation for the votaries of equality to see how natural grace can dispense with money. The supreme art of dress for women lies in not confusing the means with the end, that is to say, in securing that the attention of the spectator shall be fixed on herself and not on her clothes. Most of our modern Parisiennes understand this principle, and, strange to say, those who do not understand it are ugly, old, or disagreeable.

M. Marcel Prevost, the author of *Les Demi-Vierges*, once wrote: "Beauty and fashion have their laws, which may be studied and set forth as exactly as the laws of geometry or hygiene. The durability of a style of dress or coiffure is no more governed by chance than that of a style in architecture or furniture—I mean a *style*, not simply one particular coiffure, or one costume. The history of fashion constantly proves to us that a particular hat, bodice, skirt, may have a sudden and violent but fugitive success, while certain manners of dress or arrangement of hair, like the decoration or furniture of a house, last as long as their epoch, that is, as long as do the political and social circumstances in which they exist. What is this special feature which assures an almost eternal duration? The bow, the salutation *à la Française*, from a man, the Louis XVI corsage, are to all intents and purposes eternal; they will remain as a precise image in the least scholarly memories; they impose themselves on the most modern as a principle of invention. Why is this? Because they adequately

expressed the surroundings and the manners of their time. They are inseparable from them. They can no more be abolished than can the literature, the politics, or the military glory of an epoch." Nothing can be more true.

Fashion varies continually, but its most successful expression, its most original character, endures, fixed on the cinematograph films of history. The changes of the mode also remain in our memories. The retrospective art of the theatre, the taste for fancy dress, perpetuate them. Only transitional and fanciful fashions disappear. They are connected one with the other by insignificant, meaningless details, by the necessary alteration of lines, and modifications of extravagance, such as paniers, crinolines, high collars, and pyramidal coiffures. What actually survives is perhaps the average of these arbitrary extremes. We imagine this character and reconstruct it, and perhaps it does not really exist—no paradox will prove it. But it is of no importance. One's imagination leans more to legend than to positive history.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE KINGDOM OF FASHION

*Parisian designers of fashion : The great dressmakers : The headquarters of feminine dress and extravagance in Paris : Behind the scenes in the large shops : The salaries of workwomen*

PARIS is unquestionably the city of the world where art and intelligence offer the greatest advantages for the embellishment of beauty ; but the tyrannical genius of fashion reigns only within a small circle, a sort of island or oasis of extravagance. This area is the quarter of the city lying between the Rue de Rivoli on the south, the Chaussée d'Antin on the north, the Rue Taitbout on the east, and the Rue Royale on the west. It is a town within a town, a brilliant hive humming with the thousand industrial activities devoted to the elaboration of costumes for the adornment of the richest and prettiest women in the world. The Rue de la Paix, connecting the brilliant quarter of the opera with the old royal promenade of the Tuileries by the Rue Castiglione, may be called the centre of these industries. Here, as in the Rue Royale, are to be found the most expensive jewellers, the masters of costume, of millinery, of perfumes. The Rue de la Paix represents the youngest, the most graceful, the "smartest" side of the capital. The windows of the old hotels radiating round the Place Vendôme are rejuvenated by modern fashions, and exhibit perfumes, silks, jewels, rare and costly furs, plumed hats, and fine lingerie.

This sumptuous quarter of the city attracts not only

Parisians but the whole world. Women of fashion from London, New York, and St. Petersburg fly to it as to a paradise of flowers, airy fabrics and ideal adornments, where to-morrow's fashions are elaborated. The arbiters of taste, the great milliners, dressmakers, and furriers, impose their authority from their headquarters on the women of both worlds. A dozen men, by some superior feeling for design, some poetic instinct for the rhythm of a toilette, can change the dress and outward expression of the modern woman every season. These men are subtle diplomats, authoritative and skilful masters; they succeed in ruling the most frivolous and attractive of the fair sex more automatically than any king.

At the extreme end of the Rue du Quatre-Septembre stands a massive building, filled with noisy shouting men of business: this building is the Bourse. In the Rue de la Paix, the Avenue de l'Opéra, the Boulevard Haussmann, and the Rue Royale, is another Bourse, less noisy but still more active—the *Bourse of clothes*. Here a commerce is carried on more considerable in value and importance than all the traffic of the French ports in corn, metals, or coal—for the business of this Bourse is that of beauty. Behind the brilliant proscenium is the stage where the drama of work is enacted, where the social question, not less real for the workgirl than for the miner and factory operative, takes a form as serious as it is unexpected. This drama has been little described, but it possesses human interest for the public infinitely greater than any other. For a psychologist such as Balzac, no country in the world, no industrial centre can offer such an enthralling study. All the heights and depths in heaven and hell are to be found in this kingdom of fashion, from the cold and haughty elegance of its wealthy clients to the sufferings and tears of its humble workgirls.

The keen competition between the leading houses of business gives a constant impetus to the production each season of new schemes of costume. Each of the great dress-



makers tries to surprise his neighbour by the invention of some new walking suit or ball-dress ; a coat which every one passionately desires to wear, or a skirt of some special cut, impossible for an inferior tailor to reproduce. Style is the sovereign master. There is at present no School of Fashion as there is a School of Fine Arts, and the secret of the laws of elegance—that supreme grace of the fashionable woman—cannot be learnt in any official academy. The art of dress is the most difficult art of all. It is fugitive, subtle, fascinating, unexpected, like those who inspire it. Life follows the fashion, is regulated by its caprices, wears the yoke of the sovereign goddess whose sceptre is a weather-cock, and adapts itself to her varied desires.

It is a curious fact that the great French man-milliner dates from the reign of Napoleon III. Before 1850 women were dressed by persons of their own sex. The great women dressmakers, whose designs are seen in eighteenth-century prints, held their place for a considerable period. But to-day man is the master, the all-powerful autocrat of great ladies' dresses. Moreover, these men are artists. The autocratic beauties of the present day are immortalised by great painters, such as Sargent, Shannon, Jacques Blanche, Albert Besnard, Boldini and others, just as the beauties of the eighteenth century had their Watteau and Gainsborough, but now by the side of the painters are the great Parisian *modistes* who are their collaborators, in the sense that they dress their models with a taste, a delicacy, and a feeling for drapery and colour which are in the true sense artistic.

Michelet was right when he said : "Most of the trades are in truth branches of an art. . . . The tailor, for instance, is very near the sculptor. For one tailor who shapes, understands, and corrects nature, I would give willingly three classical sculptors."

Charles Blanc, in a book on *L'Art dans la parure et dans le vêtement*, makes a study of the general laws of ornament, and clearly shows that, far from being a frivolous study,

dress as personal adornment is a sure indication of contemporary thought.

It would be interesting to write the history of the great French dressmakers since the time of Worth. Worth was an Englishman, who first made his appearance in London towards 1850 in the shawl business. He then went to Paris, where he distinguished himself as a designer of dresses, and an instigator of various great changes in costume. For a considerable time he remained the chief autocrat of style, and it was in following his example that many intelligent men, relinquishing their various professions, became designers of dress and acquired world-wide reputations. Most of them achieved rapid success, and in spite of increasing competition, their clients increased daily. The volume of business in most of these houses is enormous. There are customers who spend annually at their dressmaker's between 35,000 and 50,000 francs, and one elderly American lady noted for her extravagance is reported to have spent in one year 350,000 francs. We may form some idea of the number of gowns ordered by this eccentric lady by estimating the average price of a dress at 700 francs. The great danger of such trading is, as may be supposed, the difficulty of obtaining payment when the yearly accounts are rendered. Women, the true daughters of Eve, are easily led astray by their vanity, and are intoxicated by the loveliness of the models shown them. They frequently lose their heads, and miscalculate their means. Many of them are taken by surprise on receiving their bills, called in their modern slang *les grandes douloureuses*, and various difficulties arise. Many young wives dare not tell their husbands of the enormous sums they owe. They are obliged to prevaricate and temporise, and the special merit of the dressmaker is to have patience and not to prejudice his interests by ill-timed or maladroit applications for payment. Often it results that he becomes the friend and confidant of his pretty client who has appealed to his good nature, and in accepting new

orders, adds to debts already too large. The dressmaker, in consequence, occupies a curious position in Parisian households, and plays a Mephistophelean part in many divorce cases. Dramatists constantly introduce this personage into their plays, caricaturing the comic sides of his character, his infatuation, and his pretensions to recognition as a great artist.

The proportion of materials used by these dressmaking houses is roughly as follows: *Silks*, 46 *per cent.*; *lace*, 13 *per cent.*; *trimmings*, 11 *per cent.*; *furs*, 8 *per cent.*; *embroidery*, 7½ *per cent.*; *silks for lining*, 4½ *per cent.*; *woollen material*, 3½ *per cent.*; *feathers*, 2 *per cent.* Flowers, bones for lining, stiff muslin, thread, needles, &c., make up the total.

In regard to the actual *clientèle*, the great shops near the Place Vendôme reckon that their exports amount to nearly 50 *per cent.* of their whole business. They are divided thus :

(1) Goods sent on commission and to various middlemen abroad.

(2) Goods sent to English, American, and German dressmakers, who visit Paris once or twice in the year to inspect new models and leave orders, even when they do not actually buy in order to reproduce.

(3) Sales in Paris to foreigners who come specially to renew their wardrobes.

The customers from Paris and the French provinces scarcely buy more than 35 *per cent.* of the total turnover.

Considering the great reputation of the Parisian woman for elegance, this seems a very small proportion. It is partly explained by the fact that a large majority of well-dressed women employ inexpensive dressmakers, clever enough to copy the new models at a low price. Whole books might be written describing the little devices practised in the making of a dress in the latest fashion.

The average turnover in the houses of these kings of fashion amounts to between eight and nine million francs.

These enormous sums are divided between four and five thousand accounts of varying extent. Some of the accounts are quite moderate, while others are fabulously large. Many women enjoy the advantage of a reduction of more than 60 per cent. on their purchases, by reason of the special position they hold in the artistic world. These ladies are popular actresses, concert or music-hall singers, the wives of important journalists, or women who are sufficiently beautiful to give a certain advertisement to a fashion—in fact all those who, by their connections or personal celebrity, are able to add to the customers of these large firms.

These shops are in possession of the most minute and detailed information respecting their clients in Paris and abroad, particularly as regards their solvency. There is a *white* list of those who have an assured income and pay cash ; a *yellow* list of those whose means are moderate, and who only pay after frequent requests ; and finally a *black* list for those whose resources are most uncertain, and who never pay for anything. These bad debts are numerous and many of them are incurred by women of high rank, who, to all appearances, should figure on the white list. Without mentioning even such names as have appeared in newspapers all over the world, it may safely be said that among the royal families of Europe there are a certain number of women who are never able to pay their dressmakers. On a final estimate about 15 per cent. of the accounts in the large shops must be reckoned annually as bad debts. It follows that the good clients must pay for the bad ones.

A philosopher might reflect that a large portion of humanity thinks, lives, and acts only to satisfy the most insatiable and tyrannical goddess—"Fashion." From the hunter in the forest or plain down to the humble work-woman in the great towns, the number of men and women employed in the search for raw material, or in the fabrication of clothes, is enormous. The labour of the world, if considered in all its details, is in great part devoted to

dressing the most beautiful among women in comfort, luxury, and splendour.

It is a curious fact that whenever a new fashion becomes popular, it at once either creates or revives a branch of industry. If fashion orders fine and soft muslins, new methods of manufacture are invented, and the factories work at high pressure. If it decrees that lace is not to be worn, the production of this lovely art which made the fortunes of Bruges, Chantilly, and Venice, is paralysed. The crinoline of former times brought into existence innumerable factories of steel, and the fashion for wearing bustles gave an impetus to the horsehair trade which has never been repeated. Changes of fashion, controlled as a rule by the great dressmakers, have thus an immense economic importance; one may go further and say that they have an equal social importance, and that the condition of women employed in the making of costumes deserves some attention from the legislator.

We have thus returned to the question of the workgirl, and we will take a peep into the busy hive where she labours ceaselessly. In dressmaking establishments the work is divided among different grades of workers. First there are the cutters, who cut up the material according to pattern, and pass the pieces on to others who tack them together. Then come the machinists who are responsible for the larger seams. Next there are the needlewomen who bear the pretty name of *les petites mains*, and execute the more delicate work which can only be done by hand. The making of a dress is also divided between the bodice hands and those who make the trimmings, the skirt hands, and the girls working on the linings. These are only the larger divisions of labour. It would take too long to enumerate the many subdivisions of the work in a large shop.

The important clients as a rule only see the attractive surface of these great businesses, and have no knowledge of the prodigious amount of work done behind the scenes.

They see a score of pretty girls called *mannequins* who try on the costumes, and a few skilful fitters. But, employed in carrying out their orders, there are eight hundred girls working in feverish haste, in small, gloomy, badly lighted rooms, carefully concealed out of sight. Here, according to grade, seniority, or capacity for work, the sharp, haughty forewomen issue their orders to the hundreds of human beings under their control. Here the cutters do their work, others distribute, measure, verify, arrange pieces. Scattered amongst them are the poor little apprentices, hustled here and there, elbowed about, cross and grumbling. Suddenly a door opens, and we find ourselves in the most luxurious part of the house. Flowers are everywhere, reflected in mirrors, soft carpets lie on the polished floors. Here is performed the rite of fitting-on, as solemn and complete in words and gestures as some mystic ceremony. Several clients are sitting in a pretty group, making a circle of harmonious colours and draperies. Sometimes, unfortunately, their appearance does not do justice to their surroundings, as many of those who wait on them, especially the *mannequins*, are younger and prettier, but the clients impersonate rank and money, they dominate the women who are obliged to submit to their caprices, and dare not smile at their pretensions. A discussion arises between buyer and seller. The buyer desires a certain material; the forewoman, who always knows better what is really the *dernier cri*, suggests a new fabric, or an eccentric colour just in vogue. Then the *mannequin* appears, displaying the gown to the best advantage with her beautiful figure and carriage. She can never wear this garment except in the showroom, where she is paid for exercising one of the most ironical and ungrateful callings to which any woman has to submit. At the desire of the customer the *mannequin* is told to turn, raise her arms, bend her head, stoop, sit down, or walk, executing every movement with grace and dignity. A girl stands by holding pins, needle and thread, to correct and

modify. The customer smiles and makes up her mind. The spacious fitting-rooms in these great shops constitute only a gilded circle in the hell where a countless number of poor, delicate little Parisiennes labour. The workrooms in which the girls are crowded together in a small space are close and insanitary. I could draw a picture of the condition of these poor girls which would fill the hearts of their social superiors with pity. The Comte d'Haussonville has attempted it in *Misères et Remèdes*, but the subject is far from being exhausted.

No one seems to think of the seamy side of the great businesses in the kingdom of fashion. The fine ladies who dress, chatter, and undress, thinking very little more of social questions than do the birds in some gilt cage, would be horrified if, in adorning themselves for a dinner or ball, their silk skirts and creamy underwear could reveal what patience and nights of toil and misery have gone to their production. The forewomen and the pretty *mannequins*, who earn decent salaries, may be excepted from these painful conditions, but their number is necessarily small. Behind their comparatively fortunate sisters, who have attained to their position through luck, good looks, or successful intrigue, there are thousands of girls who, after a day of twelve or more hours of toil, are paid 4 francs or 4.50 at the most. Many of them only earn 3.50. There is also the dead season to reckon with, when nothing at all is earned, and they are reduced to absolute want. Moreover, all this refers to exceedingly skilled workers, apprenticed from their childhood. The inexperienced ones, the unhappy needlewomen who toil in their own wretched homes, or are scattered through the large workrooms, can scarcely earn 1.75 or 2 francs. *Two francs* for having stitched from dawn to dusk ! Every day thousands of young and delicate creatures, some already the victims of disease, might sob out the terrible words of the English poet's "Song of the Shirt." Let us think sometimes of these seamstresses.

these little fairies of fashion, whose charms are so frequently the subject of joyous songs in the French music-halls. What a life is theirs ! Every morning they are to be seen streaming in from the populous and remote quarters of the city, clean, tidy, and even smart. Perhaps more than one has left a mother ill in bed, a father in the hospital, brothers and sisters more or less badly clothed and fed. But their youth and natural gaiety of spirits are proof against these troubles, and they go to the gilded cages where they are to be imprisoned and deprived of air, light, and horizon, chattering and singing like liberated birds. At midday the cage door is opened and out they fly gaily, to take their short and frugal meal in the cheapest and most promiscuous places. This sudden rush at midday has given them the name of *midinettes*. The least fortunate, those who can hardly afford to dress and feed themselves, are forced to be contented with a cup of milk, hastily swallowed with a roll or *brioche*. Some of them achieve miracles of economy, and while remaining virtuous (which is less rare than is generally supposed) contrive to keep a needy family out of their slender means, and at the same time manage to be neatly and prettily dressed. Theirs is not an enviable lot, especially when youth is past, and when disease or death seems their inevitable lot. Their lives are spent in hard work in the service of imperious fashion. The luxury of others, and the triumph of beauty in costume, is at their expense. A few kind-hearted and generous men and women, during the last ten or twelve years, have been trying to improve the condition of these girls, and several societies have been founded in Paris for their benefit. I may mention the *Mimi-Pinson*, one of the most recent and most successful. But the results achieved are small as yet, and I should rejoice if I knew that fashionable women were at last realising the tie between them and these delicate producers of their luxury, their taste, and their beautiful garments.



## CHAPTER V

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF PARISIAN WOMEN

*The two banks of the Seine : Paris divided into departments :  
Solitary places of the Left Bank : The special Parisian  
quality of the Right Bank : Notes on a journey from the  
Place de la Nation to the Place de l'Étoile*

A HUMORIST of the generation of 1840-1860, which is already remote, who gave to the world his amusing collection of *Physiologies*, announced, under the pseudonym of "Malte Blond," that he would publish a *General Geography of Women*, in which the exact statistical and descriptive science of Malte Bruns and Élisée Reclus would have found an unexpected if ingenious application. It is much to be regretted that this original idea was not carried out in a permanent and literary form. The subject would furnish material for a picturesque work, sparkling, paradoxical, and whimsical, often most amusing, and assuredly not commonplace. The geography, or rather the ethnography of women in both hemispheres would give infinite opportunity for physiological study. Such a study could extend itself to the scientific world, or make incursions into certain pornographic conditions where woman is brutalised by her servitude to man. There are ample documents at hand for such investigation. But while waiting for this interesting document to be written, we may, in the meantime, briefly sketch in outline the principal features of the gynæcographical map of Paris.

The Seine divides the city into its two leading parts, named respectively the Right Bank and the Left—the former may be painted in bright striking colours, the latter in the

grey-blue tones of study and melancholy. The Right Bank or the north side of the river is of an opposite character to its topographical position, as it denotes movement, pleasure, noise, and frivolity ; it is distinctly southern in its characteristics. The women there are more fashionable, better dressed, and have all the character of the true Parisienne. The lady of the Right Bank reflects the tone, the feeling and *chic* of her habitat. The districts where grace, wealth, and distinction flourish, extend towards the west and gain ground every day ; those of the centre have a heterogeneous character ; those towards the east are densely populous and contain the productive elements. There the women of the working and the lower middle classes are crowded together, and little or nothing is done to provide for the hygiene they require more than any other class.

The Right Bank is a sort of heptarchy whose kingdoms are l'Étoile, Batignolles, Montmartre, La Chapelle, Belleville, La Nation, and l'Opéra. The manners and customs of these seven states are typical enough to inspire a physiologist to draw up the programme of "a tour through the departments of the north, east, and west of the capital." It is to be hoped that a modern Delvau will undertake this study, and write a work to gladden the heart of the Paris collector. There were many such writers in former times ; are there none left ? Our task at present is a more modest one, and is limited to the mere outline of such a scheme.

The Left Bank has a much colder and more peaceful character. It may be called the provincial part of the metropolis, a province full of charm not exiled beyond the gates of the city, but hiding behind the river from the whirl of gaiety and noise of the opposite bank. The women who live on the Left Bank are essentially different from those who live on the Right. They are quieter, more conventional. One feels that the lady of the Left Bank is proud of her quarter, that she rightly considers herself as part of the aristocracy it contains, the aristocracy of race,

science, literature, and art. She shows by her perfectly correct behaviour, sometimes correct to the point of exaggeration, that she is of the Faubourg St. Germain or very near to it, for the noble Faubourg extends from the Invalides to St. Germain des Prés on the one side, and from the Quai Voltaire and the Quai d'Orsay to the Luxembourg on the other.

The Parisiennes who live within this circle are none of them free from a certain haughtiness, and give themselves an air of social and moral superiority when they mention their address to folk on the opposite bank. The principal districts of this great region are, on the west—Vaugirard, Grenelle, and the Invalides (or *Les Invalides*, as it is commonly called) in the centre; the *Boul' Miche*,\* the Luxembourg, and Montparnasse (the centre of jurisprudence, medicine, and painting); on the east, Montrouge and the Gobelins, vulgarly called *Les Gob*. The students, the factory hands, all the professional women of the Left Bank, have a very distinctive character, easily distinguished by the trained observer. The *Montrougiennes* and the *Vaugirardaises* are the provincials of Paris, the least up to date, the last to assimilate the feelings and impulses of the capital. To the historian of the future belongs the task of writing on the "Departments of Paris" and describing fully the character, language, manners, and ideas of its different feminine types. We cannot attempt here to develop our observations, and merely aim at an introduction to some later and more concentrated study of these various Parisian classes, each of which plays a part in our society. This is, therefore, only a sketch, faintly outlined and coloured, of the map of feminine Paris. There is, however, no city in the world where, in such relatively small space, is to be found such a large and successive variety of types, manners, dress, and professions. Starting, for example, at the Place de la Nation, near Vincennes, travelling towards the Étoile at

\* Slang for Boulevard St. Michel.

the other side of Paris, we may observe in this journey of about fifteen kilometres the most interesting and various feminine types it is possible to imagine. Moving quickly, although worn and half crippled with toil, we meet street-sweepers, cigar-makers, bookbinders, shopgirls, servants, street hawkers, washerwomen, all hurrying with quick mechanical steps to their work. Along the Faubourg St. Antoine and the Rue de Rivoli the scene changes gradually like a kaleidoscope. Near the Bastille are the little business bourgeois, girl clerks, accountants, florists, polishers, lace-workers, dyers, saleswomen, making for the Caire and Petits-Carreaux quarter. Farther on, near the Hôtel de Ville, are the errand girls, laundresses, bourgeois with bags and baskets, all kinds of agents, general servants, girls seeking places, governesses, students returning home after a night of dissipation, a whole medley of needy mediocrity; a rather saddening spectacle. The "Métro" Porte de Vincennes-Maillot contains examples of all these types travelling from east to west.

If we take an oblique line towards the north between the Boulevard Sebastopol and the Rue Pont Neuf, we meet the noisy population of the markets with their clatter of vans and hand-carts. An enormous number of women come here every morning from the centre of Paris, besides cooks and housekeepers. There are retail meat-sellers, fruiterers, all kinds of small shopkeepers, oyster-sellers, coffee and soup and milk stallkeepers, chickweed merchants—an interminable list of women belonging to the small trades.

On nearing the Palais Royal there is a complete transformation in the type and physiognomy of the passer-by. They become well dressed, and even smart; dressmakers, girls attended by maids going to their studios, to the Louvre, or to their music lessons, young married women to shops or amusements, governesses and children's nurses, foreign visitors armed with their Baedekers, Conservatoire students,

dancers going to rehearsals, all gloved and correctly dressed in well-fitting clothes, crossing the bridges in opposite directions either towards the Bon Marché or the Opéra—all these various types are represented at the different omnibus bureaux at the Place du Théâtre Français. For the omnibus at this favoured centre, like the "Métro," deposits its fair passengers from the Odéon or Clichy, from the Filles du Calvaire or Ternes, from the Porte Maillot or the Halle aux Vins, and by underground from Marbeuf, the Concorde, Tuileries, St. Antoine and the Bastille.

Ascending the Champs-Élysées towards the Place de l'Étoile we see all the morning occupations of fashionable life, the lady on horseback, the bicyclist, the model, the soubrette, the lectrice, the manicurist, the *masseuse*, the pianist, the *demi-mondaine*, the neurasthenic woman, the woman taking exercise for her health—among these last is the very ladylike Englishwoman. Here also are ladies of charity, devout women on their way to the church of St. Pierre de Chaillot or to St. Philippe.

And while all this world is walking up and down the side alleys of the great avenue, some leading or carrying lap-dogs, lavishing on them caresses they would hardly give their children, in the roadway are carriages drawn by thoroughbred horses, or beautiful motors, bearing pretty *demi-mondaines*, exquisite under their fresh powder, on their way to the Bois de Boulogne. What tired-looking women one sees through the carriage windows; what worn and lined faces enervated by idleness! There is a striking contrast between this quarter and the distant regions of the Trône or the Avenue Ledru-Rollin.

L'Étoile, as it is called by the train and tram conductors, lies at the end of our excursion to-day, for on the horizon lies the *Bois*, the great morning bath of air for all those who are able to take it, and an absolute necessity for the fashionable woman.

At the end of this rapid journey through the centre of the

capital, we have every reason for preferring this most attractive side of the Parisian medal, but in charity we must give a glance to the reverse side, the side stained and tarnished by physical misery, by the sweat of poor girls condemned to the penal servitude of daily toil, and whose conditions we will now study, together with the miserable wages which inevitably lead to prostitution.

## CHAPTER VI

### DOMESTIC SERVICE

*Women in domestic service in Paris : The lady's maid : The cook : The children's nurse : The maid-of-all-work : The charwoman : The waitress at Duval's : The wet-nurse : The governess : The lady companion*

OF all the women living in Paris, the least amenable to Parisian influence, the most antagonistic to their surroundings, the most untouched by metropolitan conditions, are the servants of all grades, with the exception of certain smart maids attached to the *demi-monde*.

Whether they come from Auvergne or Poitou, from Morvan or Brittany, from La Vendée or Gascony, from Provence or even from Flanders, the servants of Paris scarcely ever lose the tone of their native places, the accent of their provinces, or the traces of their origin.

Thus they have long served as types and comic personages, to be ridiculed by the Parisian bourgeoisie in vaudevilles and melodramas or in Palais Royal farces. The maid-servant plays an important part as the subject of conversation in Paris households. In circles where domestic trifles are discussed (*i.e.* in nearly all Parisian flats), scarcely anything is talked of but "these creatures."

"Are you satisfied with your servants, dear madame?" is one of the phrases which immediately sets fire to the train of an inevitable dialogue in a bourgeois household. Confidences expand in the neighbourhood of the kitchen, and women's friendships seem to flourish in this particular soil.

One hears on all sides, "That girl is beyond everything!" and

"What do you think I found yesterday?" or "Nowadays one must not be too particular; there are not too many good servants, and one must stick to those one has," and other remarks too trivial to repeat. They form a subject of conversation when one calls on newly married brides, and experienced matrons take pleasure in advising these new recruits to domesticity, inculcating suspicion and severity.

Indulgent old ladies who are kind-hearted and have a sense of literary expression generally conclude with the classic phrase of the author of *Figaro*: "C'est une plaie sociale évidemment, ma chère enfant: mais aux vertus que les maîtres exigent de leurs domestiques, combien, pensez-vous, seraient en mesure d'être leurs propres serviteurs?"

#### AXIOMS

Servants are the natural enemies of their mistresses, and *vice versa*.

Only the men of the household are kind to them. "*Monsieur est si bon*" is a stock phrase.

Mistresses in general are tyrannical, suspicious, "near," revengeful, and unkind to their "slaves." They lock up everything, count the sugar and candles, search boxes, notice carefully the purchases made, deduct from wages for breakages, and parsimoniously prescribe how much of what is left from each meal shall appear next day.

The French bourgeoisie is the most severe of mistresses; she could give points to an overseer of slaves.

The Parisian "bonne" is infinitely superior, by the amount of work she performs and by her qualities of intelligence, to Anglo-Saxon servants, who are abominable.

Women servants form a very important part of the Parisian household, and it is worthy of note that servants of all descriptions, *i.e.* housemaids, cooks, general servants, nursemaids, babies' nurses, and charwomen, are nearly all natives of the provinces. The Parisian girl does not take



kindly to domestic service. She is too independent, and her desire for perpetual change gives her a distaste for forming part of a family. She will, perhaps, take a situation as maid, especially with the *demi-monde*, in the hope that through one of these ladies or her gentlemen friends she will make her fortune. She reflects that her mistress's origin, probably Belleville or some poor quarter, is no better than her own, and that she is certainly not any prettier or more charming. This hope is frequently realised, particularly if the maid is pretty and treats the guests with discretion. In any case, this kind of situation is only a stepping-stone, and very often the girl who begins her career as a maid in the Quartier de l'Europe or Monceau may be seen subsequently figuring as a star at the Moulin Rouge, as a singer in a fifth-rate café, or (the last resource of old age) the proprietress of some shady house at Batignolles or near the École Militaire.

She has learnt from her mistress the great game of getting the most possible out of Monsieur, and she plays it with remarkable success—within the limits of the law. But in the first instance she is more of a soubrette than a maid-servant; the lineal descendant of *Lisette* and *Marion*; the pretty smart girl who always has an answer ready for the *Frontins* and *Scapins* of the servants' hall. She has the advantage over them of the natural duplicity of her sex, and the unassailable position of being in all her mistress's secrets. She is her agent in trickery; she knows all her mysteries, her deceptions, her debts, her intrigues, her dressmaker's bills. Nothing is hidden from her. She is on the watch, observes everything, and succeeds in accumulating sufficient materials to make her position absolutely secure. She is coquettish, scrupulously clean, scented, affects a superior accent, and seasons her conversation with a spice of racy slang. She reads Balzac, Pigault, Lebrun, Méténier, Octave Mirbeau, who wrote the "Diary" of one of her species. She is very sentimental, and loves;

above all, the feuilletons in the papers. If she is not as successful as she hopes with a mistress, she tries her hand on some old bachelor, and becomes his confidential housekeeper, as accommodating as Béranger's *Babet*. But the soubrette is, after all, an exotic, the confidante and familiar companion raised out of her class. Let us return to our humble country girl.

The greater part of the servants in Paris, as we have said, come from the provinces. They are almost entirely drawn from the peasant class, but let no one imagine that for this reason they are humble and devoted to their masters. The devoted servant adoring the children, sharing the sorrows of the family, offering her little savings in case of need—in short, the female Caleb, has no existence except in romances. These melodramatic creatures who brought tears to the eyes of our grandmothers are not of our day. At the time of the Revolution, servants were still content to be considered dependents, to-day they regard themselves as office-holders, they form a caste apart; they have their union and have instituted at the Salle Wagram a ball named the *Gens de Maison*.

Their object in coming to Paris is to make money, save it, and buy a small property in their native country. With this end in view they hoard rigidly, in a hard narrow spirit, with no consideration except for the future. Formerly they tried their hands at lotteries, to-day they invest in a savings bank with assuredly more chance of success.

This servant class has a hierarchy of many degrees. The nursery governess is at the top of the list, then the lady's maid struggles for the second place with the high-class cook; lower in the scale come the children's nurse, the general servant, and the *femme de ménage* (charwoman). There is also a privileged personage, flattered, despised, and envied by the other sycophants—the person who sells her sturdy child's milk to the bourgeoisie's weakly infant; I mean the wet-nurse (*nourrice*).

The lady's maid, who must not be confounded with the soubrette previously noticed, is very often of the same native place as her mistress, sometimes her foster-sister. She is generally from sixteen to twenty-five years old. She dresses her mistress, does her mending, irons small articles, rummages in the drawers on pretext of tidying, reads forgotten letters, annexes any nicknacks lying about, takes advantage of any passing generosity of her mistress in order to get possession of dresses and hats more or less the worse for wear. She is usually plain and prudish, goes to Mass on Sundays, attends to her Easter duties, and below stairs gives herself airs of superiority over the other servants. In domestic quarrels she takes Madame's part against Monsieur, not from any affection, but partly through a sense of *esprit de corps*, and partly that in a sense she regards Monsieur from Madame's point of view, *i.e.* as a husband. An entirely platonic feeling, let us hasten to say, as she carefully keeps aloof from Monsieur's endearments, more out of prudence than from principle. She desires to keep her place. Her wage amounts to from forty to seventy francs per month. When she returns to her province at thirty-five she is able to bestow on some obscure clerk her somewhat faded charms, and her very equivocal savings; these she can invest in a small business in groceries, fruit, drapery, or dressmaking, and so the world is richer for another bourgeoisie.

The cook is a middle-aged woman of from thirty-five to forty-five years of age, sometimes married, either to the coachman or the chauffeur, if her employers' means permit them to keep horses or motor-cars; or perhaps to some clerk or policeman who lives elsewhere, and whom she visits on one day in the week, generally on Sunday. She is a tall, stout, imposing person, with a face like a full moon, and very proud of her culinary skill. She is extremely clean, and she will not allow any interference from her mistress. "I won't have any one meddling with my sauces," she says. A spoilt dish reduces her to despair; she revenges

herself on her scapegoat, the poor scullery-maid. She has no hesitation in keeping back some tit-bits for her husband. Anything that is left over she sells. She accepts her commission from the tradespeople, and is very indignant if her mistress presumes to assist at the marketings. Frequently she has been known, in such circumstances, to give notice in a burst of righteous indignation. She is very sentimental, reads assiduously the novelettes in the *Petit Journal* signed by Richebourg, Montépin, or Jules Mary, and is passionately interested in accounts of kidnapped children or adultery in fashionable quarters. She hums sentimental songs while she trusses a fowl or stirs a sauce. She is a regular Mrs. Malaprop, and mangles hopelessly all the terms in her *menus*. She is quite absorbed by a desire to make money, and keeps at a distance all the men who may be attracted by her formidable personality. Her wages amount to from fifty to eighty francs per month. The dream of her life is to retire with her husband into the provinces, and keep a small inn.

The children's nurse is generally German or English. This post is the highest in the profession. The nurse is held in a certain respect, as she is treated somewhat like a governess. Even if she only comes from the provinces, she receives a certain amount of deference ; she lives mostly with her employers, and therefore knows how to behave, though this does not prevent her from using the most startling language when the children are not there. Her age varies from twenty to twenty-five years. She is often pretty, and her ambition is to struggle for precedence with the lady's maid. If her mistress allows her to wear a hat she is in the seventh heaven of bliss. She is bored by the children, and often tries to terrorise them, telling them tales of giants and ghosts. It is amusing to see her, in the public gardens, displaying the greatest affection for her little charges, joining in their games, that is, if Madame is present, but cross, haughty, and ready with slaps if she is alone

with the "little brats." Her favourite occupation is to make eyes at the passers-by. As she is generally pretty, she is made much of in the house. She has charming manners, and boasts to the other servants of the fancy Monsieur has for her. She reads quantities of novels, and the most extraordinary adventures appear to her quite reasonable. She dreams of being loved for herself alone, and of eloping, as in the romantic tales at sixty centimes. Perhaps she has left some fair Wilhelm in her native country, to whom she writes ardent letters. The children's nurses provide a large contingent for the reserve belonging to the great army of Parisian sirens, and many of them are found in the beer-houses of the Latin quarter. Consumed by a love of luxury and proud of their looks, they can earn as wages on an average thirty-five to fifty francs, which is spent immediately in finery. Nursemaids are an exception to the rest of their class, they are extravagant and hardly save anything.

The maid-of-all-work is a stout girl from the country. She has a low order of intelligence, is condemned to the hardest tasks, and performs the entire work of the household for those who employ her—being at the same time housemaid, cook, and children's nurse. She sews, irons, and mends for the family. She has to rise before dawn, go late to bed, and has time for only one idea, viz. to get through as much work as possible in order to avoid the scolding tongue of the harsh bourgeoisie, her mistress. Her great dread is of breakages, as she is fined for these out of her wages. Paris terrifies her and she holds it at arm's-length, thinking all Parisians "bad lots." Although she is generally plain, she is fresh and well-rounded, and has sometimes to submit passively to the attentions of Monsieur, as well as those of the clerks and men-servants, who are crowded in the terrible dens of garrets in one of which she sleeps; all the same she generally goes out on Sunday with some man of her own province, a labourer or carter. They walk demurely on the fortifications, hand in hand, and gaze longingly at the

country in the distance. The maid-of-all-work is generally a good girl; naturally honest, and very long-suffering, except when she is cheated of her just wages, which are about thirty-five to forty francs a month. When she is married and returns to her province she will own a little farm, where she will work her fingers to the bone to pay her way.

The *femme de ménage* (charwoman) is at "six sous per hour" a godsend to the bachelor. She has come from some little provincial town with her husband, who works in a factory in the suburbs; or she is the wife of a cabdriver, or of a porter at the Bon Marché or the Louvre. Her life is a hard one. After she is swallowed up in the whirlpool of Paris, she can rarely return to the country. She dies exhausted by hard work, worn out by poverty and child-bearing. Sometimes, when the children are self-supporting, she can go out to service. She is generally from thirty to fifty-five years of age. In the morning at about seven o'clock—as soon as her husband has left for his work and her children for school or the *crèche*—she goes to her "Monsieur," carrying his milk, his morning rolls and other provisions, calling for his newspapers and letters from the concierge, with whom she exchanges gossip. Being good at heart, as are all the working people who do not come too much in contact with the bourgeoisie, she is interested in her Monsieur's welfare, although she allows herself a bit of gossip with the concierge on the terrible "creatures" who come to see him; she is attentive to his wants, sees that his breakfast is good, and that his boots shine like mirrors. She is amiable and willing, and he would have no occasion for finding fault if she had not, unfortunately, a mania for tidying away all his things into places where he can never find them. If Monsieur is a painter, a journalist, or an author, she has the greatest respect for his work. She considers his MSS. and books, his canvases and engravings, as things to be treated with boundless veneration. She is immensely proud to serve an

"artist." Sometimes she will venture to ask him to write a letter for her. She will consult him about her family affairs, especially on any legal question, for the law terrifies her beyond measure. When she returns home she has to see to her children's dinner, to wash their clothes, to mend for the entire family. In the evening she must cook supper for her husband, who frequently comes home drunk, having spent all his wages, and turns to beating her. She endures everything passively, and she must go on enduring as long as her strength lasts. She is honest, tender, and devoted—and all this for twenty or forty sous per day ! She is typical of the working woman.

"The *femme de ménage*," truly says a physiologist of 1840, "belongs exclusively to Paris. In the provinces she loses all her distinctive character." It is from Paris alone, the Paris of resources and deceptions, that the *femme de ménage* springs. She is the servant of those who cannot afford any other, and who are not poor enough to dispense with one altogether. It is service at a discount, a bastard kind of servitude which sells itself by retail, which submits to the pains of slavery without any of its advantages, which suffers a change of master, humour and work at every moment of the day. She is, in fact, a poor woman who is hired either by the hour or the job just as one hires a cab. The *femme de ménage* is the most enslaved of all servants. However, this cruel dependence on every one and no one in particular is still independence in her eyes.

The young or old bachelor in Paris finds also a special providence in the restaurant waitress, and especially in the waitresses at Duval's. This pleasant personage may very well be included in the domestic service of Paris. She much prefers to serve men at her table, as they are generally more decisive in their orders, quicker in the despatch of their meals, and more generous than the women customers who come alone or surrounded by children. The little waitress at Duval's is generally charming, very clean, helpful, intelli-

gent, and gifted with an extraordinary memory and attention to her clients, only to be equalled by the black servants—those delightful waiters of the new world. The Duval waitress shows great preference for her regular clients. One might call them her admirers, as often a vague sort of sentiment springs up between the client and his waitress. She is so sweet, so attractive in her black dress, half hidden by the apron and bib white as snow, her beautiful head of hair framed in the cap, coquettishly tied on one side between the ear and the chin; she walks with such a delightful swagger, and flies so lightly to order the *menu*, that one perfectly understands the habitual clients' attentions.

The Duval waitress has her privileges; she arrives at her work at seven o'clock. She arranges the dining-rooms, sweeps, dusts, helps to prepare the vegetables, and is ready at ten o'clock for the orders of the public. In the evening after nine-thirty she is at liberty and goes home to her tidy, clean rooms, where, in spite of the fatigues of the day, she often finds occupation for her heart. Those who know say she is attractive and faithful.

She is superior in class to the ordinary domestic servant, for she is not wholly dependent, and this relative liberty has a refining influence, partly owing to her freedom for conversation with her clients, partly to her powers of observation, quickened by the necessities of her calling. She can earn—serving at three or four tables—from four to eight francs per day, according to the gratuities she receives, which naturally vary in the different quarters of the town. In some parts of Paris the Duval restaurant at certain times became the rage, and it was the correct thing for fashionable people to be seen there.

The poet Maurice Rollinat wrote the praises of the Duval waitresses in a *Dizain réaliste*, now forgotten. It begins thus:

*Mon nostalgique amour de la Côte et du Val  
Me fait souvent dîner dans un bouillon Duval.*



Songs in the café-concerts have also celebrated them. One of them may be quoted :

*Elles n'nous font pas manger du cheval  
Les p'tites bonnes de chez Duval.*

The *nourrice* (wet-nurse) is merely a kind of milch cow, always stout and fresh-looking. She comes from the country, often after a lapse from virtue, and is engaged haphazard from a registry office by bourgeois who cannot or will not nurse their own children. She is extraordinarily passive, and feeds the infant mechanically. It hardly interests her, and she would leave it to cry or neglect to wash it unless supervised. Of a very rudimentary intelligence, she only demands plenty of good food and drink. But as she is dominated by sensuality, she cannot keep away from men, and would very quickly fall again if great care were not taken. I knew of a *nourrice* who was married, and whose husband served his time in a regiment in Paris. He came to see his wife whenever possible, and it was most absurd to see the constant supervision by the mistress of the house. The two unfortunate creatures could only look at each other. They dared not even kiss, for Madame was always there, like a gendarme, to keep their virtue intact. When the infant is weaned, the nurse sometimes stays with the family as the children's nurse. But, as she dislikes Paris, she more often returns to the country where the former misadventure is repeated. Her business in life is, in truth, the only one she is fitted for. Idle, greedy, enervated by her relatively luxurious life in Paris, she is unfitted for work in the fields. The other servants despise her. Their self-respect makes them contemptuous of a woman who sells her life in that fashion. But they are jealous of her, because she does nothing and is well fed.

The *nourrice* receives from 80 to 120 francs a month. Besides her wages, she is dressed entirely by Madame in a striking and expensive costume. Her caps, with the enor-

mous ribbon trimmings, often cost as much as her mistress's hats.

On the top rung of the domestic ladder are the governess and the lady companion. We will not include in the long category the sick-nurses, masseuses, manicurists, &c. The old-fashioned sick-nurse has disappeared, at least the old type has been transformed. She is no longer the large, heavy, gossiping creature pictured by Henri Monnier and Frederic Soulié. Nowadays she is a lay nurse, who has left her hospital, or a retired midwife very proud of her medical acquaintances, who calls herself a masseuse. She imposes her knowledge and advice with an almost comical authority on her unfortunate patients, saying proudly: "When I was nursing for Dr. X—— we used so-and-so, just as I am doing now. You must do as I say, or I will not answer for the consequences." The sick-nurse earns five francs a day, and often twice that for the night. She expects to be abundantly fed.

Daily governesses are not servants. They must, however, be included in this sketch. They are recruited principally from the young girls who have passed their examinations and live in their parents' homes. Owing to the comprehensive education of women at the present day, and the large number of diplomas given, the statistics of "governesses unemployed" show a higher figure every year. Paris is full of them, and families who desire a suitable person to undertake their little girls' education have an enormous choice. The governess is generally the daughter of an honest artisan, who has strained every nerve to educate his daughter above her class, and thinks he has succeeded wonderfully in elevating her to a career which ought to place her on a level with the leisured classes. The usual result is that the poor girl belongs to no class at all. The modern governess and her position in society have often been made the subject of novels and treatises. Our authors have described her as a heroine with an ambitious character.

She has played the principal part in many realistic scenes at the theatre, and from the sociological point of view is a problem more discussed every day. Here there is only space for a bare mention.

The lady companion also belongs to no special class ; she is a passive victim of family ruin, widowhood, or neglect. She is studious and literary, a sort of faded blue-stocking. She is a mystery, a dreamer, a poor wounded dove, whose troubles, mortifications and sadness would fill, she thinks, three hundred pages of a novel. Her profession places her always with solitary old ladies, or sometimes with bachelors, who have been embittered by egotism and a life void of direct and normal affections. This derelict of life has no other choice (except in rare cases) than that of casting in her lot with other derelicts. If she is with a lady who is not too provincial in her home, the companion's duties consist in accompanying her employer on her visits, in taking her place in the house if she is ill, in travelling with her, looking out her trains, paying her hotel bills, writing her letters, and reading aloud when she feels sleepy after meals. If with an old gentleman, the lady companion is also a housekeeper. She takes the control of the household, gives orders to the servants and tradespeople, does the accounts, writes letters, and reads the papers.

The salaries of these ladies are difficult to state. Some of them, receiving board and lodging, are satisfied with four or five louis per month, others demand two or three times as much. All have one aim—independence—in view ; a secret hope, a dream only half confessed, *i.e.* to be remembered in the will of her or him whom they serve with such apparent devotion. The death of the master or mistress is a deliverance for these poor slaves, who play the part of guardian angels only in outward seeming. Sometimes they marry the men whose housekeepers they have been. They thus become legitimate lady companions, and immediately enter the ranks of the highest respectability.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WORKWOMEN OF PARIS

*The factory-worker : The journeywoman : The baker's assistant : Miscellaneous occupations : Laundresses : Florists : Needlewomen : Dressmakers : Errand-girls : Milliners*

THE question of women's work and wages, in Paris and in all the large centres of France, is beginning to engage the serious attention of economists and sociologists. M. Jules Simon's book *l'Ouvrière* is already out of date, and therefore inaccurate as regards work at the present time ; yet it retains its interest and, though not profound, it shows conscientious study of facts. More recently, M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu has published a book on *Le Travail des femmes au XIX<sup>m</sup> Siècle*, a methodical collection of facts rather than the original work of an observer of manners. Lastly, M. le Comte d'Haussonville, in his *Misères et Remèdes*, has given us a series of social studies, and has drawn up a clear account of women's wages in Paris and the provinces—a profoundly sad revelation.

In all these publications the authors generalise too freely on the subject of the workwoman. In the following pages on the workwomen of Paris, we will try not to deal with their arguments but to give a rapid sketch of the most obvious types, without attempting to exhaust a subject which must be reviewed again and again before the Government takes in hand the task of protecting these underpaid and overworked women in every possible way.

There are in Paris about 135,000 workwomen of all professions, whose wages average 2.25 francs for about ten hours' work. The greater number are the *ouvrières du dehors*.

The *ouvrières du dehors* are those who, not having the means of being their own mistresses, work away from their homes, either for the State or for companies or for private persons. To this class belong those who work *journées bourgeoises*, that is, with dressmakers, with laundresses, and bakers.

To give exact statistics of the number of these workwomen would be almost impossible, and also useless. In Paris at this moment there is scarcely any industry, except the iron and metal industries (requiring great physical strength), which does not employ feminine labour, either exclusively—as in the case of dressmakers, shirtmakers, corset-makers, florists, bootmakers, and laundresses—or in collaboration with men, as in cigar-works, match factories, trimming-making, printing works, &c. We must be satisfied with examining the common characteristics of the worker in the more ordinary trades. Here again there are various grades according to the greater or less degree of cleanliness of the work. The aristocrats are those who work at making various kinds of clothes, milliners, dressmakers, corset-makers, &c.

Beginning at the lowest rung of the ladder, we find the women who work in the Government manufactories, cigarette, textile and match factories. These are the real proletariat, the drift cast up by the waves of the great city, victims since their childhood of debauchery, in the terrible promiscuity of the slums where they live in perpetual contact with filth and indecency.

These factory girls, in spite of their ignorance and physical depravity, are often generous, capable of devotion, ready to help their "protectors" in case of need, and ready to give their last sou to help those poorer than themselves.

They are greatly superior to the workgirls from the country, who are dishonest, miserly, rough, and devoid of pity if money is in question.

The factory-workers include women of all ages, sometimes living in legitimate wedlock, but more often, especially if young, in a state of promiscuous concubinage, passing from one lover to another, as a chance evening meeting or the exigencies of hunger may dictate. Many are found among them who, either from idleness or incapacity, have quitted some more lucrative work. Here there is no question of coquetry or indeed of anything but the terrible struggle for daily bread. The cigarette-makers are the most fortunate, as their work is less severe, though they are bound by stringent rules exacting fines for the least distraction or waste of time. Amongst the match-factory workers, those who pack the matches into boxes are forced by rule to keep silence, and observe many precautions for fear of fire. The sulphur-workers often become consumptive, and as a result of their unwholesome work many of them grow physically deformed. Textile workers are condemned to the worst form of labour. Physical strength almost equal to men's is required of them, and their work demands sustained attention ; for the least thread broken, a fine is exacted. They are divided into bobbin-winders, those who divide the yarn into skeins, and those who convey the skeins in skeps from room to room. These poor women are dirty, neglected, debauched, treated like dogs by their masters and overseers, ill-fed, and insufficiently paid. Many of them drink, and others give themselves up in the evenings to clandestine prostitution. They generally die before they reach the age of fifty. Between twelve and one o'clock in the afternoon, on the outlying boulevards at Montparnasse, Montrouge, and Grenelle, or near Belleville and Vincennes, these poor women are to be found at dinner, miserably dressed, a handkerchief tied round their necks, shivering in their thin, ill-fitting clothes. They sit there in silence,

drinking their soup out of bowls, unwrapping their portion of cold meat, and washing down the miserable meal with water from the nearest fountain. The most degraded go to the nearest eating-house, and for the price of a drink are allowed to sit at a table, where they can eat the unsavoury scraps they bring with them, or the remains of yesterday's meals.

They have a slouching, furtive manner, their voices are rough and coarse, and they are ready with a coarse joke or insult for any passer-by who regards them too closely. They loaf back to the factory with a heavy depressed air. One feels, on merely looking at them, that they are weary of life, and that they will display neither anger nor regret when the time comes to "throw up the sponge" at the hospital. They have had more than enough of poverty and rough treatment. If they are married and have babies, their happiest days are Sundays on the fortifications, where they sit between their man and the little one on the scanty discoloured grass. They make a little picnic here under the sky, and while the lord and master snores, his cap over his eyes, and his pipe in his mouth, they cheer themselves by the charm of baby, jumping him on their knees, and laughing, singing, and talking nonsense to him.

The wages of match and cigarette makers is from 2.50 to 3 francs per day ; spinners receive about 1.50 to 2 francs. These last, like the weavers (generally men), are frequently out of work, as progress in machinery reduces the number of workers and the wages of those who remain. There is, no doubt, a scale prescribing a minimum wage, but no one observes it, and the Government is too busy about other things to see that it is enforced. Strikes are more violent in the textile trades than in many other industries. The women suffer more than the men, and are more determined. They give way only when they are absolutely destitute and have no prospect of other resources.

Match and cigarette makers are to be found at Grenelle

and Montrouge ; textile-workers at Grenelle, Billancourt, St. Denis, St. Ouen, &c.

Besides these factory-workers are those one may call the *isolées*, including the day dressmaker, the baker's assistant, the washerwoman. Let us glance at these desperately over-worked creatures. The dressmaker by the day is an independent woman who works for bourgeois families. She is either a young widow left without income, or an orphan of fairly good class, recommended by charitable persons, or an ordinary workgirl who fears, or whose parents fear for her, the contamination of the workshop. She is usually plainly dressed in mourning, rather gloomy and resigned. She arrives at eight in the morning, sits near the window, and sews till the evening, either by machine or by hand. She does not talk, or laugh, or sing. Does she think ? Her pale face is always bent over her work. Her fingers fly in feverish haste. If she has to fit on, she is gentle and obsequious. She always agrees with Madame, "Madame has such good taste." If she ought to tack, she tacks ; if she ought to stitch, she stitches. Economical and loving durable things, she uses linings which will wear well. She understands all the tastes of the lower middle class who employ her. She knows by instinct what she must not say, and what she may suggest. A bit of padding here will improve a thin figure, a high collar will hide a long neck. She knows all the tricks necessary in her profession to conceal the defects of nature. She flits round Madame, inspects, tightens here and there, using pins from her bodice, which bristles with them. She speaks in a soft, humble voice ; bears reproof in silence, and looks at everything in a cold dispassionate way. The children are afraid of her. At eight o'clock, after her dinner (she is abstemious, and only drinks water faintly tinged with wine), she folds her serviette methodically, says good night, and departs noiselessly. Poor girl ! In the street she walks fast, without stopping to look around her. No one thinks of speaking to



her. They know her type. When she reaches home she undresses methodically, putting everything in the same place every evening, lies on her cold bed, hardly aware of her melancholy condition. She does not dream, but she snores. She is paid 2 francs, or 2.50 per day. Sometimes she sits at table with her employer. Other families, more aristocratic, send her to the kitchen.

The *porteuse de pain* (baker's assistant) is, with the milk-woman and street-sweeper, one of the earliest workers one meets in the Paris streets. Every one going home late, or rather in the early morning hours, has met this sturdy woman with her little go-cart filled with hot rolls. She wears an apron with braces crossed over her back like the letter X, for the preservation of the store of baked wheat which she distributes on her round. The baker's assistant has no special age. She varies between twenty-five and forty-five, but she wears that curious sort of expression, often seen in her class, defying research. She is rarely good-looking or attractive. She is nothing in particular. Her figure is concealed in many folds of thick woollen material, which is itself covered by her blue wrapper. On her feet are goloshes or felt shoes. Yet she is not heavy or clumsy; on the contrary, she steps softly and lightly.

As soon as the baker's shop opens—that is long before six o'clock—this brave saleswoman arrives quite punctually, fills her little cart with a formidable burden of loaves, long, round, of all shapes, and goes her rounds from door to door. She knows by heart the wants of her customers: this one only desires *boulots*, that other prefers *polkas*, the lady on the third floor will have nothing but *fondue*, the old gentleman on the *entresol* likes *riche*, another who has diabetes can only take rusks without crumb. On the first floor is a foreigner who breakfasts on Viennese rolls; the scientific man on the sixth eats rye bread. What more does she not know? Some people pay every week, those others

whose cook is so rude, and who are so very smart, owe for more than a month, and the little bill is still unpaid.

The assistant leaves her bread against the doors of the various floors, wrapped in a bit of whity-brown paper. Sometimes she must climb five stories to leave a roll worth two sous, but she never counts the stairs. She climbs perhaps four or five hundred in a morning, always cheerfully and actively, without any intermission, except to return to the bakery for further loads of bread, or to drink a glass of coarse brandy with other porters and carriers at a little drinking-bar of the quarter. The distribution is over at about half-past twelve, and the good woman adds up her accounts and goes home. Her husband (she is always married or a widow) is gone to his work. She busies herself with the children, cooks their dinner, washes them rigorously, goes here and there, lunches as she stands, runs up and down stairs. She is perpetually on the move and never seems tired. Her mission in life is to rush about. In the afternoon she sews, or even does some charing. Her earnings amount to fourteen francs per week and a kilogramme of bread. On January 6, the Epiphany, when she leaves a gratuitous roll, ornamented with a little china doll, on her clients, she receives some presents in return. The *porteuse de pain* was the subject and the title of a celebrated play at the Ambigu Theatre, by Xavier de Montépin, adapted from one of his novels of the same name. She has an excellent nature, a good heart, although she is inclined to be surly and is somewhat of a busybody. As a rule she abhors the *concierges*.

The laundresses form an important corps in the army of Parisian labour. At the present moment Paris spends 125,000 francs per day on washing, and in the city and its suburbs are more than 98,000 laundresses, ironers, clear-starchers, and laundresses' assistants.

The woman who washes is on the lowest rung of this ladder, and her work is of the roughest and most menial

description. She arrives at six in the morning, at the boats on the Seine or one of the washhouses of her quarter, and stays there till about seven in the evening. She receives the soiled linen, often in a most disgusting condition, which she has to count several times to ensure that nothing is lost ; she sorts it into fine, medium, and heavy, and into the various categories of shirts, handkerchiefs, sheets, towels, &c., also into colours and materials. The washhouse, where she nearly breaks her back rinsing and beating the heavy clothes, is a large shed, open to every wind that blows. Here she works all the year round, her arms plunged into water, perspiring and shivering at the same time, soaping, rubbing, rinsing, drying, and folding the clothes.

In summer, the care of the copper, where the clothes are left to boil, makes her perspire also, and as the draughts blow on her from all sides, she is an easy victim to congestion of the lungs, bronchitis, or rheumatism. Moreover, in fifteen cases out of twenty she is troubled with hernia, caused by the enormous weights of the linen she has to lift.

The washerwoman has only one period of rest in the day, that is towards half-past three or four, when, by the custom of the trade, her employer allows her a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. Following the expression used by labourers, she calls this break *faire le raccord*.

No calling is more precarious than this. The linen must be ready, washed, rinsed, and dried at a fixed time. If the cleansing is insufficient, or if, owing to frost, it is as hard as a board, so much the worse, it must still be in time or the laundress loses her place. Even in the washhouse there are good and bad positions. New-comers naturally get the worst ones. If, perhaps by sheer physical strength, the girl captures for herself a good one, it will be taken from her if at any time she comes late to work. Terrible quarrels then ensue. Laundry hands have a remarkable vocabulary ; they are capable in this respect of beating the market

women on their own ground. If a dispute arises, there are insults and blows. The porter (generally a strong man) interferes, not only by words; he uses his fists freely and the worst offenders are turned out.

The washerwoman has no time to attend to her own household. Her husband generally has his meals outside, drinks, and beats her. Her daughter has a horror of her mother's calling, and would not help her for anything in the world. She prefers to go out and amuse herself. The son leaves home as soon as he can support himself. She, poor soul, could not endure this terrible existence without the aid of drink; she keeps herself up with spirits. At night, after many "nips" of absinthe and *mêlé-cassis*, she is often dead-drunk. However, with all this, few workwomen have a more generous sympathy with misfortune. Any subscription made for a fellow-worker in distress is sure of her help. She dies generally at about fifty or sixty, worn out by chronic drinking, general paralysis, or acute rheumatism.

With expenses deducted (for her position in the washhouse costs her one sou per hour) she can hardly earn more than three or four francs per day. In some places she has to supply her own carbonate of soda or soap. All she earns is spent on drink in advance. Despised by her *concierge*, hated by her neighbours, distrusted by her grocer and butcher, she is execrated on all sides. Her great strength alone (for this is a necessity to her) makes her work, with its terrible fatigue, possible. One may well say that of all the unfortunates of the social hell, she is among the most miserable.

The ironers and clear-starchers are clean, coquettish, and often really pretty, and almost all of them (strange to say) have pretty hands. It cannot be said that their souls are as immaculate as the linen they iron. These girls have a shocking reputation for folly and grossness. Popular slang has given them the name of *baquets* (tubs), which

they regard as supremely insulting. As they are nearly all prostitutes, they hardly deserve the following charming verse written by a *Parnassien*, which was sung in *Lilins et Valentin* :

*La Blanchisseuse  
Est bonne travailleuse.  
Dès le matin,  
Le fer en main,  
Elle repasse.  
Et dit d'un air malin  
Au galant qui l'agace ;  
Tu repasse, passe, passe  
Tu repasseras demain.*

They haunt the outskirts of the city, are inveterate dancers, descend sometimes to the lowest forms of prostitution, and are also given to drink. They do not hesitate sometimes to pawn (*chez ma tante*) their clients' linen to pay for some piece of dissipation. Many of them support a lover ; others in carrying their linen to bachelor's rooms, sell themselves there. Their employer shuts her eyes to all this in choosing the prettiest of them for *filles de semaine*. This is the term for the attractive creatures one meets in the street, in coquettishly short skirts, carrying their baskets of linen. Charles Monselet has written some gallant verses about these girls, the delight of student life, who call on the bachelor with his shirts.

In Paris there is a term always used if a man has made a *mésalliance*. They say, "He has married his laundress," no matter what is his wife's origin.

The ironers and clear-starchers undergo a two years' apprenticeship. At the end of that time they can earn three francs per day. They have only one privilege, the frugal lunch at three o'clock, provided by their employer. They remain in their business till about forty, and then disappear—heaven knows where ! They are worn out with

long hours of standing. Their legs are varicose, their lungs destroyed by abuse of *fil en quatre* (common brandy).

Lower in the scale than the dressmakers (of whom we shall speak later) are the artificial flower-makers, trimming-makers, boot-stitchers, varnishers, bead-makers, book-binders, and compositors. These callings are most unhealthy ones. For example, the hands and faces of the varnishers are stained red with metallic powder, which they do not try to remove during the week. The trimming-makers live in the dust made by wool; their hair is thick with it. In handling the freshly dyed material, their hands become hard and stained. The artificial flower-makers and book-binders are covered with paste, and the compositors with ink or oxide of lead. They are all careless of their dress in the workshops. They generally share the work with men, and are under the orders of a foreman. They chatter amongst themselves, however, exchange spicy jokes with the men, or shout the latest popular songs very much out of tune. If they are pretty they are entirely at the mercy of the inspectors, of the male employés, or the master. If they resist, a pretext is found for getting rid of them. A certain number are married, others live with a workshop companion. They stay in their situations longer than dressmakers' or milliners' hands, and the ne'er-do-well who throws her cap over the windmill is not often met with. They have a great deal of *esprit de corps*, and are quite ready to go on strike as soon as the order is given.

The trimming-maker is a good, honest woman, who; after a long and difficult apprenticeship, can earn from 3.50 to 5 francs a day. The largest wholesale houses are in the Rue de Cléry. The materials are made in Auvergne; at a ridiculously low price.

The bead-makers, or embroideresses in beads, receive lower wages than the trimming-makers, as the competition is enormous. There are numbers of wholesale houses in Paris, and the factories at Lunéville swamp Parisian

enterprise, which holds the lead only in hand-work (called net or wire-work), for which a great variety of beads is used—jet, gold and steel spangles, sequins, &c.

The flower-makers deserve a monograph all to themselves ; they are like some heroines of Charles Dickens and Alphonse Daudet. These delicate creatures are employed in work which appears light, easy, and graceful, but is in reality dangerous and painful. Few can live on it, and it is a fact that many die of it. In the manufacture of roses, a screw is used in stamping the petals, and the girls are apt to receive blows on the breast during the process, which frequently cause cancer. Excepting the wreath-makers, who can earn high wages, a good flower-maker can earn five or six francs a day, but the trade is only carried on for four or five months in the year, and during the seven or eight months of slack time the girls must find other means of livelihood, infinitely less productive.

There are many other women's trades in Paris which it would be interesting to describe : embroidery, feather-making, old paper sorting, quill-cutting, battledore making, stamping notepaper and cards with black for mourning, waistcoat and trouser making, sewing, machining, umbrella and parasol making, carpet-mending, glove and boot stitching, map-colouring, shirt-making. The list is interminable, and we must renounce any idea of describing the workers at these trades for fear of compiling a veritable dictionary like the *Nouveau Larousse*. We will therefore pass on to a conspicuous class of workwomen ; needlewomen, dressmakers, milliners, and those who work by the day.

These, by predilection and as part of their business, are tidy and clean in appearance. They rival one another in dress. They are by way of following the fashions ; they wear hats, affect bright ribbons, and jewellery more or less in fashion—an obvious subject for the jealous comments of their comrades—and if the garments underneath are not very beautiful, and their shoes are in holes, at least the cut

of the skirt is good. They may not do very much in the way of washing, but defects are concealed by powder and cream. If they do not mend their linen, they cover it with cheap scent. They lace themselves into fashionable corsets, and the thin ones improve their figures with padding, or, as they call it in their workshop slang, with *petit quinze sous*.

At the luncheon hour they may be seen in parties of five or six, arm-in-arm across the pavement, chattering, laughing at the people they pass, suddenly assuming an air of offended propriety if any one speaks to them, and flying off like startled birds at the hour for return. As their "shops" are often situated in the centre of the town, they may be found towards midday on the boulevard. At the workshop they are under the orders of the forewoman, a sharp-tongued old maid, who is not sparing of scoldings and insulting remarks. But nothing checks their gaiety. They gossip, they chaff each other, affecting all the time an air of superior breeding. These girls, although they enjoy *risqué* talk, will not use indecent expressions. If any one has a doubtful story, she whispers it to her neighbour, and it goes the round in private. They adore sentimental romances; some one is always there to hum idiotic verses, and the chorus is taken up, very softly, for fear of Madame. Madame is at times rather tiresome.

Here is a verse and refrain, sung some years ago with much success at café-concerts, and a great favourite in the workshops. It may be called the Workgirls' Marseillaise :

*Allons, les p'tites modistes,  
Couturières et fleuristes,  
Relevez gentiment  
Le bas de la jupe en marchant ;  
Écoutez la patronne,  
La vieille qui bougonne ;  
Dépêchez-vous d'rentrez  
A l'atelier pour turbiner.*



*Entendez-vous midi qui sonne ?  
 C'est l'heure de votre déjeuner ;  
 La pomme de terre frite bouillonne  
 Et la brie coule chez le fruitier ;  
 Allez recevoir la becquée  
 Dans un joli cornet d'papier  
 Et boire la goutte de rosée  
 A la Wallace du quartier.*

The workroom songs are countless ; the repertory of Polin, Yvette Guilbert, Duparc, Anna Thibault, Paulette Darty, Paula Brebion, and, above all, Mayol, have always an immense success with the girls ; but the sickly sweet songs, with languorous refrains, recounting lovers' despair, are specially popular, *Les Bois, les Cerises, les Larmes*. " Ah ! my dear, how touching ! "

There are some workrooms where talking is forbidden, and the mistress must be away or engaged elsewhere before the tongues are loosened.

The most highly privileged are the *trottins* (or, rather, the *coursières*, for the *trottins*, strictly speaking, belong to the milliner), those, that is to say, who carry the work to its destination. They are from fourteen to seventeen years of age, and they trot through the streets on their errands, stopping at the shop-windows, especially the jewellers', cracking nuts, or eating green apples, listening with affected indifference to the propositions of old gentlemen, and quite ready to slap their faces if they go too far. The *trottins* of Paris are such a special product of the town that they deserve a chapter to themselves.

#### " TROTTINS " OF PARIS

*Mesdemoiselles les Trottins* are light and graceful creatures with an elastic dawdling gait, with faces curiously irregular, the expression odd and whimsical, eyes observant and a little shifty. They go with their bandboxes on their arms,

their short skirts swinging from their thin hips, inviting the loungers, that modern faun, to a pursuit of their unripe charms. They come from the milliners' shops in the La Paix quarter. At present they are only *coursières*, *arpettes*, or *groulasses* as they are called in the trade. They walk in their shocking boots on the asphalt or wood of the streets either to the wholesale houses, or to carry to fashionable customers the latest hat in feathers or flowers.

Almost all are real Paris slum children—children brought up anyhow, in horrible surroundings, among angry disputes, indecent language, initiated by parents' love-scenes and grown-up sisters' conversation. They have been in contact with all kinds of impropriety; they know the vocabulary of the worst prostitutes, and they have grown up with all the inquisitiveness of vice and its instinctive desire for destruction, and yet preserving an extraordinary kind of ingenuousness. This is not their least charm. Full of fun, drollery, and slyness, of queer words and odd gestures, these street urchins in petticoats are the monkeys of the work-room. They are the amusement of every one, and are often hardly treated, as they are at the service of all, carrying love-letters for the seniors, running errands, fetching sweets and cakes from the confectioner's, ordered about by every one at once; but they manage to keep their heads, and they learn by some miracle the different stages of work in their trade.

In the evening when they leave their shop, at the time when young men are waiting about for their sweethearts, the *trottins* rush out like a flight of sparrows across the pavement. On seeing them frisk about, munching cakes, playing all sorts of pranks, laughing and singing *risqué* songs, one forgets all the worries and annoyances of their day, their long errands, their bad and insufficient food, bolted at a corner of the table, and of the misery and discomfort they will find on going home. Their youth triumphs over these drawbacks; their happy thoughtlessness helps

them to forget, directly they leave their work, the scoldings of their mistress, and the insolence of the senior girls. Here they are in the street, alone or in groups, the delight of old gentlemen, at whom they make eyes for fun. They thoroughly enjoy being followed, hearing remarks made to them, receiving all with shrieks of laughter.

These dear little *trottins* are a very pleasant feature of the Paris streets. Their queer little faces are necessary to the proper setting of the scene. They have been so often the subject of songs, of poetry, of literature and art, from the café-concert to the book, from the chromo to the *genre* picture. Their pretty charm, their delicate forms, their mischievous laughter, their sly glances, and their lounging air before the shops attracts and pleases modern fancy.

A collection of all that has been written on them would be very curious. At random we may take some verses from a little-known poet, M. Abel Letalle.

*Trottant, trottant, trottant, trottant,  
Trottinant, toutes très gentilles,  
Le pied menu, l'œil éclatant,  
Elles s'en vont, les belles filles.*

*Qu'elles sont reines, quand leur main  
Soulève un petit pan de robe,  
Qui laisse flotter en chemin  
Un parfum que l'air nous dérobe !*

*Oh ! qu'on aime à les voir souvent  
Avec leur gaieté claire et blonde !  
Comme, avec leur sourire au vent,  
Chacun ferait le tour du monde !*

*Jusqu'au jour où peu résolu  
A trotter, trotter sans cesse,  
De par le faveur d'une . . . Altesse,  
Les beaux trottins ne trottent plus.*

These are light and pretty verses which could be set easily to music. There are many like them, which would make an excellent set of songs issued with a frontispiece by M. Jean Béraud, the master of the chromo-lithograph and of the graceful spirit of Paris.

But the *trottins*, on the occasion of a not very successful strike of dressmakers' girls, got beyond mere sentimental songs, and "The Revolutionary March of the Dressmakers" was composed specially for them, and sold, and even sung, in the streets.

*Que demande un petit trottin (bis)*  
*De chez Worth, ou de chez Paquin (bis) ?*  
*Un peu plus de salaire,*  
*Moins de travail à faire,*  
*Et trois coups de torchon,*  
*Vive le son, vive le son,*  
*Et trois coups de torchon,*  
*Vive le son du violon !*

*L'industrie a des chevaliers (bis)*  
*Qui régulent leurs ateliers (bis)*  
*Mais, ô jeunes compagnes,*  
*Il vaut mieux hors du bagne*  
*Se nourrir de chansons,*  
*Vive le son, vive le son,*  
*Se nourrir de chansons,*  
*Vive le son du violon !*

The poor girls were soon obliged to return to their work. Their escapades at the Bourse du Travail could not continue for long. No deputy came to their assistance. Were they electors ? Certainly not ; therefore they counted for nothing. Our democracy, based as it is on the suffrage, could not trouble itself about the fate of women who had not the vote, and from whom there was nothing to fear.

The *trottin* of Paris has been in existence since the eighteenth century. Foreign travellers, who have left an account of their visits, have spoken of the charm of the little *trotteuses* they met in the street. Sterne, in his *Sentimental Journey*, relates the visit of one of them to his hotel; and in an exquisite sketch describes her coquetry and curious mannerism. In the *Mésangère* are amusing examples of the *trottin* under the Directory, with her large bandbox covered with sprigged paper, and her wavy hair under a cap, or a turban prettily knotted over the forehead. Later, in the Grisette period, the *trottin* becomes romantic, in her lace guimpe, large sleeves, tiny apron, full short skirt showing her leg and pretty foot and neat shoes. Déveria, Johannot, Henri Monnier, and afterwards Gavarni, have immortalised the girls of this epoch of nascent Renaissance in some charming pages. The history of the *trottin* is parallel with the history of our manners and our Parisianism. Restif de la Bretonne, the lover of the *Pied de Fanchette* and the shopgirls of Paris, was the first to write about this flower of the streets, as Sébastien Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris*, drew their grace and beauty.

How many queens of the theatre and of the *demi-monde* began their careers as *trottins*? The list would be a long one, the adventures interesting to follow; very often this ill-formed child, so conspicuous in appearance, so quick at repartee, so perverted on the surface, is only waiting for love to change her and reveal a clear soul and a lively spirit with a delicious ingenuousness. The child, like so many of her fellows, swaggers about her vices and her precocious licentiousness. She affects all this to take the tone of her companions, for fear of their chaff. She makes believe she has seen much of the world, but beneath all her childish curiosity the "world" frightens her. She is really full of sentimental dreams and fatuous songs, which she sings with much emotion at her shop, shedding tears over them if she is alone, for she takes her sentiment very seriously. As

long as the *trottin* exists the *grisette* will not altogether disappear. There are still *Mimis* and *Musettes* among the frail creatures who make up the greater part of the suicides due to unhappy love.

In spite of their affectation of propriety, the conduct of dressmakers is not beyond reproach. The greater number of them, from the ages of fifteen or sixteen, form irregular connections with the son of some neighbour. Or, again, they may fall victims to the charm of some scented and pomaded young shopman, or, having left the paternal roof, they may live under the protection of some "gentleman" of independent means, or perhaps a clerk, in an apartment which he pays for; though he makes it a condition that she shall have some occupation, fearing that idleness will produce infidelity.

The prettiest among them are ready enough to accept the proposals of gentlemen willing to "launch" them, and they form an important part of the *demi-monde*. Others, at about twenty-five, marry some workman who is not particular about the past, and add to the proletariat. The plain and unlucky ones remain unmarried, grow religious, keep a cat, a canary, or a parrot, and become forewomen in their workrooms.

On Sundays these girls can be seen with their admirers invading Suresnes, Meudon, Billancourt, Asnières, and especially Robinson, gaily excited with feasting and swinging. They go in crowds also to the public *fêtes*. At Neuilly and the "gingerbread" fairs, they are seen madly careering on roundabouts, hurling themselves down chutes, stuffing themselves with mussels, *gaufres*, and fried potatoes. And on Sunday evenings the dancing-rooms under shops, the Moulin de la Galette and even Bullier's, are full of them.

In the evenings, when they leave the shops, their admirers and lovers are waiting patiently for them. These young men are called *poireaux*. When it rains, and the admirers are sheltering under doorways, they

cry, "Look! the *poireaux* are getting dry. (" *Tiens, les poireaux séchent!* ") If a sighing swain is repulsed and teased, they say, with the air of a cat playing with a mouse, "*Vrai, j'ai rien fait poirauter, celui-là!* "

From eight o'clock to nine, in the central quarters, regularly every evening, may be seen two or three hundred of these youths walking feverishly up and down the pavement. They are all probably saying to themselves, "*Pourvu qu'on n'aille pas la faire veiller encore ce soir, ce serait du propre!* " "Pigeons always fly after doves," says one of these young ladies, with her little air of vanity.

M. Charles Benoist, an ex-journalist, now a deputy, who gives his time to Proportional Representation, wrote in *Le Temps* a series of remarkable articles on needlewomen. These articles have since been published as a book, and they are full of interesting information. We may quote a paragraph on the subject of wages. He says: "We have stated that the maximum wage of a good dressmaker's assistant, in Paris, taking into account the slack season, is 1350 francs a year, 3.70 a day. This includes only the assistants, not the forewomen, cutters, or fitters, who must be classed as employees, collaborators, and often partners of the chief. They design the models and direct their execution; and theirs is an art rather than a trade. They can earn (according to M. Albert Leduc, who was on the jury of the Exhibition of 1889) in the large dressmaking houses, as much as 15,000 or 20,000 francs a year, and in the less expensive places, 5000, 6000, and 8000 francs. But these fortunate ones are few in number. In the first-class houses the wages of the girls who are called *premières* (that is, heads of each particular department, either in skirts or bodices, &c.) reach 6, 7, or 8 francs per day. The fitters' salary is higher, but these are few in number. From the latest statistics received, we learn that the average annual wage of a good workwoman must be reckoned at 900 or 1000 francs instead of 1250. The real daily wage is therefore 2.45 or 3 francs.

"There are makers of fine underclothing," goes on M. Benoist, "who can earn 3 or 4 francs per day. But there are many who work for export houses, and who cannot earn more than 1.75. Dressing-jackets, camisoles, and other things of their kind, sold by the Louvre or Bon Marché for 2.75 or 2.50, are given out to a contractor, who receives 60 centimes, does part of the work, and distributes the rest to workwomen, to whom he only pays 50 centimes the piece. Two and a half wrappers a day (and to accomplish this they must work at break-neck speed all day and part of the night) bring in 1.25 to the unhappy worker. But in the slack season the pay drops to 80 or 90 centimes per day." These facts speak for themselves.

The daily food of dressmakers' assistants, like that of the laundresses and trimming-makers, is uncertain and unhygienic. They may well say in their picturesque way: "*Ah zut! je n'sais pas ce que j'veis manger ce matin—des briques à la sauce caillou.*" ("I'm sure I don't know what I am going to eat to-day—bricks with pebble sauce!") Their great joy is salad, gherkins, radishes. *Côtelettes pannées* and ham are considered delicious, and hard-boiled eggs are a *délicatesse*, as the Germans say.

Some of them bring their lunch in a basket. Here is an ordinary *menu*: 2 sous' worth of bread, a pickled herring at 3 sous, fried potatoes at 2 sous, a baked custard at 4 sous, a pint of weak wine and water. Others eat in a cheap restaurant somewhat after this fashion: Half a portion of veal cooked in wine 6 sous, haricots and onions 4 sous, cheese 2 sous, bread 2 sous, half a pint of common wine 4 sous. Italian cheese and galantine of pig's head are much in favour. But they all save 10 centimes on their food to buy a little bag of English sweets which they take to the workroom. After the meal they go to the bar and drink a black coffee at 2 sous. This is the crowning treat. They eat as quickly as possible to get time for a stroll



during the rest of the luncheon hour. The modest ones, who avoid the restaurants full of staring men, have a place of refuge. This is the "Restaurant-Bibliothèque," founded by a broad-minded priest, helped by some charitable persons. These places are for women only and provide good wholesome food at a low price ; they also lend books, which can be taken away and read in the evenings. The bill of fare is posted up in the room. It is as varied as possible and the food is cheap, as the managers only aim at paying expenses. The best intentions are so misunderstood, and benevolent enterprises so rarely meet with the success they deserve, that it is possible that this one may already have failed. Here is an example of the *menu* :

	Centimes
Fillet with tomato sauce . . . . .	30
Bœuf jardinière . . . . .	40
Beefsteak . . . . .	40
Aubergines, tomatoes . . . . .	20
Pommes à l'huile . . . . .	20
Riz au caramel . . . . .	15
Cœur à la crème . . . . .	15
Raisin, confiture de fraises . . . . .	15
Camembert . . . . .	10
Pain et vin . . . . .	20
Café . . . . .	10

If a workgirl wishes to lunch for 12 sous, she can easily do so. The apprentices (or *arpèdes*, as the slang term goes), who only earn 20 to 25 sous per day, are satisfied with a dish at 30 centimes which, with bread and wine, comes to 50 centimes ; 10 centimes is left for fruit, or, better still, coffee. The Paris workgirl would rather go without meat than her *petit noir*. On an average the lunch costs 15 sous. The girls in superior positions, who make on an average 5 or 6 francs per day, will spend as much as 20 sous, but such extravagance is rare. Immediately after lunch they are off. The

time allowed is short. In some establishments the girls have only three-quarters of an hour for the meal; in others, only half an hour. This rule, the masters say, is of the girls' own making, as they wish to knock off work a quarter or half an hour earlier. Those who have a full hour take their time. While they sip their coffee at leisure they turn over the catalogue of the library. When they leave, they fetch the book whose title has attracted them, entering it themselves on the register.

There are few sights more picturesque and amusing than the crowd of girls pouring out of the workshops at midday. Dressed in the perpetual black merino in winter, in printed cotton in summer, sprinkled here and there with ends of thread, they go in twos and threes to their meal.

M. Jean Ajalbert, now Director of the Musée de la Malmaison, once wrote pleasantly, in the realistic and pathetic style of Coppée, of the midday hour :

*Midi : voici sonner l'heure des ouvrières ;  
Le soleil cuit l'asphalte mou sur les trottoirs :  
C'est l'heure où, sur l'étain vulgaire des comptoirs,  
Luisent les verres pleins d'absinthes meurtrières.*

*Midi : " Plumes et fleurs " et " Robes et manteaux."  
C'est un long défilé de filles maigrelettes,  
Sortant des ateliers pour faire leurs emplettes :  
De la charcuterie, et de banals gâteaux. . . .*

*D'autres, par deux ou trois, vont dans les crémeries  
Et, toutes se penchant pour lire le menu,  
Choisissent, avec un frais sourire, ingénu,  
Dans la liste des mets, des plats à sucreries.*

*Ce mince déjeuner ne leur coûte pas cher :  
Quinze ou vingt sous, et puis deux sous de violettes ;  
Et les mignonnes au travail rentrent seulettes,  
Les fleurs se parfumant du parfum de leur chair.*

The dressmaker's day is generally one of twelve hours—from seven to seven in summer and eight to eight in winter. During the busy season they often work up to midnight or one in the morning. In this case\* by law their wages ought to be doubled, but they rarely receive more than 20 or 25 centimes per hour.

It is worthy of remark that milliners and dressmakers are, as a rule, idle people, and love change of scene. The industrious ones, when they are settled in any business, do not change (*débaucher*)† willingly. These are generally excellent workers.

The milliners are the aristocracy of the workwomen of Paris, the most elegant and distinguished. They are artists with all the disorder and carelessness which distinguish the artistic temperament. They form a body of about eight thousand, and thanks to their talent twenty-five millions annually circulate in this one industry.

Their ingenuity in design seems limitless. New models are invented almost every day; the milliners may be called the Muses of Fashion. It is in the constant renewal of shades and trimmings that the business of fashion is carried on. If Parisian women only bought one or two hats in the year, it would be the ruin of this trade, which only exists by reason of the insatiable vanity and love of change of the fashionable woman. Milliners' assistants are often pretty, or—worse; they are all young. They begin their career

\* This law appeared in the *Journal Officiel* of July 26, 1893. The first clause enacts that, in certain industries and at certain seasons, women and girls over eighteen years of age may be employed up to eleven o'clock in the evening, provided that, in any case, the hours of actual work do not exceed eleven out of the twenty-four. Amongst the trades included in this law are hatmakers of all descriptions for men and women, making of underwear for women and children, artificial flowers, feathers, tulle, lace, and silk, *i.e.* many of the trades in which the needle is used.

† This term is much used in Parisian trades. The expression is often heard from a workgirl, "*Je suis débauchée*," meaning that she has left her workshop.

as *trottins*, gaining their apprenticeship at the price of this disguised servitude, which places them at the mercy of all the libertinism of both sexes in the city.

After two years of this peripatetic life, the milliner's assistant can make 2.75 to 3 francs per day. The *premières*, that is, the most skilful, having a privileged position with the manager, can earn 2000 or 3000 francs a year and even more. Later on the milliner will be noticed again in the chapter on "Shopkeepers," for the milliner, if she is clever, soon ceases to be an assistant, and thanks to the protection of her "friends," she opens a small shop of her own in the neighbourhood of the Ternes, the Batignolles, the Quartier Latin, or Marbeuf. Her smartness is the surest guarantee of success.

Amongst the needlewomen must be counted the menders, embroideresses, tailoresses, glovers, cap-makers, upholsteresses, &c. All the workers at these laborious trades have a day of from nine to eleven hours, and barely earn an average wage of 2.75, without counting the slack seasons.

These grades of workers have manners and customs peculiar to themselves, sufficient to furnish material for an interesting study in the "general physiology of the workwoman in Paris."

The writer who undertakes this useful compilation, if he does his task thoroughly, and takes into account the question of wages, will feel all the indignation of the advanced socialist. The moral and material condition of the Parisian workwoman is monstrous and unworthy of an honest democracy. The dazzling luxury in which we live—luxury of dress, of food, of furniture—is gained at the price of terrible poverty, shameful distress, sordid bargainings; and while the middlemen, dressmakers, tailors, business people of all descriptions grow rich, the unfortunate producers, worn out by work, spent for want of sleep, badly fed, disgracefully lodged, struggle for the bare necessities of life. Without help or support they only

receive, by way of encouragement, cynical advice to fill their empty purses by remembering that they are women.

"Barbarity of our Western world!" said Michelet, "woman is no longer reckoned on for love, for the happiness of men, still less for maternity and the strength of the race, but only as a workwoman. Workwoman, that sordid, blasphemous title, which no other age, no other tongue understood, before this age of iron. This alone is enough to counterbalance all our pretended progress." All those who have reflected on her miserable fate, Jules Simon, Baudrillart, Leroy-Beaulieu, Ernest Legouvé, Charles Benoist, not to speak of foreigners, have arrived at the conclusion that women ought to remain at home, and that men only should earn the daily bread for the family.

The realisation of such an ideal seems an impossibility, but, short of a Utopia, legislators should employ any means, ordinary and extraordinary, to bring about, if not a cure, at least some alleviation of a social evil so widely spread. Is it not an absurdity to consider that while such poverty exists among us, while women are dying of phthisis through inhaling cotton, sulphur from matches, in so many dangerous occupations, while more than 60 per cent. of workers are obliged to give themselves to prostitution in order to live and to supply what is called in factories their fifth part of the day—is it not shamefully grotesque that Governments should spend millions of their countries' money in helping negroes whose social evils are lighter than ours, or in preventing alleged slave trades, or legendary human sacrifices?

Lastly, is it not infinitely painful to consider that, in a so-called chivalrous and humanitarian society, women meet rather with an attitude towards their sex of brutal, undisciplined libertinism than with brave and true defenders willing to plead their cause before the legislature which alone has power to help?

The fate of male workers is interesting, but they have

power on their side, the right to vote and rebel, and if necessary upset the existing order of things ; but the fate of women in manual labour is infinitely more precarious and worthier of any interest they can obtain.

But what can one hope from the puppets manufactured by the absurd suffrages of men ? Gratitude ? That is scarcely enough. All the thoughtless, stupid, and merciless people who prate about democratic principles forget that of Christ—the greatest of generous socialists—which is to help the weak and the disinherited ; above all, to help the victims of our morality, those who have to bear the burden of our pleasures, and who too often bitterly expiate their folly in having loved us.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRADESWOMEN AND SHOPKEEPERS

*Small Trades : Hawkers : Street stalls : Children's toy hawkers : Shopkeepers — bakers, grocers, confectioners, milliners, corset-makers, drapers, &c.*

CHATEAUBRIAND in his admirable *Mémoires d'outre Tombe* has left a charming description of his delight in returning to Paris in 1837. After a long absence abroad, he admires the social qualities of his fellow-countrymen, the ready play of intelligence, the absence of reserve and prejudice, the indifference to money, the levelling of all ranks, that equality of mind which makes French society incomparable—this great traveller and marvellous writer feels an infinite tenderness come over him for his dear Paris, and he goes into ecstasies, much as Sterne did before him, over the gracious ways, the welcoming smile, and the sympathetic manners of the little tradeswomen and shopkeepers of the capital.

The gracious and obliging manners of the shopkeepers in Paris, both big and little, is certainly beyond discussion, and contributes in a very great measure to the charm of Parisian life. From the highest to the lowest, all the shopkeepers give their customers a delightfully polite welcome; the few commonplace phrases which they exchange are marked by an attractive gentleness which has nothing to do with coquetry or age, and has a special character of personal interest for the customer, enveloping him like a perfume.

The number of shopkeepers and saleswomen in Paris is

considerable and beyond all exact statistics. The variety of their trades would puzzle the most methodical investigation, so this short survey must be taken at haphazard.

First there is the large tribe of itinerant saleswomen whose voices, more or less musical, mingle in the great symphony of Parisian sounds. Maxime du Camp estimated these hawkers at over 6000.

There are thousands of different cries, picturesque, expressive intonations, sometimes musical and often quite charming. Generally there are three or four minor notes ascending the octave, and held on the highest; or sometimes the crier begins on a high, shrill note and sharply descends; or, again, there are two repeated notes in crescendo, as in the words "Pois verts! Pois verts!" You have a staccato call like "A la barque! A la barque! Hareng qui glace!" or the following, which is a true musical phrase, "J'ai de la cerise, d' la belle cerise—cerise douce!" with a triplet on "cerise douce." And, finally, we have the classic "La Valence, la belle Valence!" for oranges, which in the eighteenth century attracted the attention of Restif de la Bretonne, with many other similar cries collected by Kastner in a large musical album.

All these women, authorised by the police, must wear a conspicuous badge, generally fastened to the waist-belt. They jog along the streets, slowly and heavily, whatever the weather or the traffic, selling, according to the season; fruit and vegetables. Some have a speciality: thus, in the tomato season they sell only tomatoes, in the grape season nothing but grapes, asparagus in May, peas from Clamart shortly afterwards. Others are eclectic, and hope to make larger profits by selling a little of everything. This business all the year round is heavy work, demanding great powers of endurance, especially since the tyrannical regulation forbidding them to stop, even to serve a client.

As they generally sell cheaper than the shops, and come into special competition with the grocers (since these last



have taken to providing everything), the shopkeepers have made so many complaints to *Quidedroit* (that is, the Government), that *Quidedroit*, who does not like to be worried, has issued a law forbidding hawkers to stop before the shops, and to be perpetually on the move. The *sergents de ville*, the natural guardians of vested interests, have strict instructions; they are always on their track and do not leave them a moment's respite. Summonses pour on them which deprive them of their positions. Anatole France, in *Crainquebille*, has shown us all the terrors of this life. Here is the story of an incident which I witnessed in the Avenue de Clichy, and may have a place here.

A workman, returning home at breakfast time, bought a pound of pears from one of the street vendors. She stopped to weigh the fruit. Up to her came an official, ironically termed *gardien de la paix*. "Move on," he said harshly. "But I must weigh the pears for monsieur," she replied humbly. "Move on, d—n you, or I will summons you!" The workman here lost his patience, and said to the bully, "If you won't let her weigh the pears I'll give you one straight between your eyes!" Many passers-by took the woman's part. (In a poor quarter the *gardiens* are not much beloved.) The *sergent* tried to take the workman by the collar, but he, having now received his pears from the trembling saleswoman, gave her his four sous and made off, protected in his retreat by the crowd, which jeered at the *sergent*. The furious official went in search of a colleague, and, returning to the woman, confiscated her barrow. Some minutes afterwards she returned, crying, indignant at the monstrous injustice. They kept her barrow for twenty-four hours, and as the pears were already ripe they were good for nothing. This is what is called justice!

All sellers of oranges, fish, early fruit and vegetables, and flowers buy their stock at the markets at 4.30 or 5 o'clock in the morning. They contract with an agent for a certain

amount of goods every day, or four or five of them join together to buy a lot at an auction. Then they arrange their purchases on their carts, often with a great deal of taste; and they start, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by one of their children, who helps to push the little rolling shop, heavily loaded. They go, and keep going, all day, shouting themselves hoarse, struggling with the customers who try to beat them down in price, only stopping at midday to eat a hasty meal, seated on a hand-cart. In the poor quarters they walk in close file, following the line of the pavement. Nothing is more attractive to the eye than this motley of colours on the carts: the silver sheen of the mackerel and fresh herrings laid on green-stuff, the brownish tints of the plaice and dab, the rose colour of the skate, the bright red tomatoes, the light green of the vegetables, or dark green of the melons—an impressionist painter would be overjoyed at such a palette.

After midday, according to law, they disperse; the sales become uncertain, and prices must be lowered. The goods have to be sold at whatever cost, for they will be unsaleable the next day. With great trouble they make at the highest 2.50 per day—at least according to their own account.

They are, as a rule, strong women of from thirty to fifty years of age, rather masculine-looking, and employing a vocabulary as lively as that of the market-women. They return home at nightfall, all except the orange-sellers, who during the season stand at the theatre doors. They are a godsend to those strange family parties who, between the acts, eat quarters of oranges on a neatly spread handkerchief. This calling of hand-cart seller is a most precarious one. They run the constant risk of bad weather and the vexatious regulations which sometimes go as far as depriving them of their badge for a certain number of days.

As they frequently have not sufficient money to make

their purchases, they become the prey of moneylenders (always on the watch in the markets), who lend them ten francs on condition that they bring back twelve the next day. They are also obliged to hire their carts at twelve to fifteen sous per day from special places, which give no credit.

But there are some still less fortunate—the “*marchandes au panier*.” These are obliged, from want of funds, to buy in considerably less stock, and naturally their profits are much smaller, hardly exceeding 1 franc to 1.50 per day. Some sell fowls or game smuggled through the *octroi*, concealed, it is supposed, under their skirts. These last make a rather larger profit, especially after the shooting season. Others do not possess even a basket; they go along the streets carrying some wretched-looking salad, a bundle of garlic or onions, or vegetables prepared for cooking. Their appearance is heartrending. They earn ten sous, twelve sous, fifteen at the outside. This must suffice for their food during the day, including a *verte*, as they call their absinthe; for nearly all of them drink in those terrible drinking-shops coloured red, where horrible drugs at three sous the glass are sold, under the name of alcohol, for the profit of a benevolent Government!

Among the itinerants may be counted the hawkers of mechanical toys—little dogs which bark when a bulb at the end of a tube is pressed, jointed bicyclists in coloured lead, little horses drawing a fire-engine with two firemen, doves which flutter on the pavement, sweepers, acrobats, &c. These hawkers are most frequently to be seen as the New Year approaches. Their husbands, perhaps while out of work or during their evenings, have made or invented a toy, and it is taken on to the boulevards, or the Avenue de l'Opéra, or outside the large railway stations, to try its luck on the pavement. Sometimes the toys are very ingenious, and a large number of them are sold, so that at the end of the day they may bring in the sum of three or four francs.

The hawkers of bootlaces, toy balloons, hairpins and curling-pins belong to the same order, as do those who sell pencils and cheap haberdashery (the last may almost be ranked as beggars); and also the hawkers of wind-mills, who carry baskets full of these toys, the many-coloured sails turning in the wind. In the early part of last century these hawkers had a curious little song, now heard no more—

*Pleurez, pleurez, petits enfants ;  
Vous aurez des moulins à vent.*

The toy hawker is the joy of the public gardens. She is to be found at the Tuileries, the Luxembourg, the Parc Monceau, and the Buttes-Chaumont, with her fat, jolly face under her cap with apple-green ribbons, attracting notice with her noisy clapper. She walks up and down, her eyes alert for possible customers. She finds a good number, and can make from 2.50 to 3 francs a day.

Besides the itinerant hawkers there are, attached to the "*Restaurant des pieds humides*," the sellers of coffee, fried potatoes, and newspapers. These do not move about, but rent a little corner from a wine merchant, or arrange with a *concierge* for a place near his door. This last position is usually taken by the coffee-stall keeper, as the eating and drinking houses are jealous of any competition. They pay a rent of fifteen to twenty francs per month, or 170 to 240 francs per year—a heavy enough sum; and the fried potatoes, slice of bread and butter, and *café au lait* must be sold at ten centimes to pay the rent at all.

These *pieds-humides* stalls have nearly disappeared, which is not surprising. Their customers were all amongst the very poor, and the constant severity of the police on the homeless, the frequent raids in the market quarters, have reduced their numbers almost to zero. The wanderer by night often sees one of these women installed near a door, a little charcoal furnace before her, where she fries

sausages of doubtful quality. Sometimes she cuts a bit of bread in two, introduces a piece of meat, dusts with pepper, waters with vinegar—and there you are for four sous! Others sell *arlequins*, a horrible mixture of fish bones and heads, haricots, slice of apple, remains of *ragout*—in fact, all the bits left on the plates of the cheap restaurants. These are sold at two sous the portion. Others, again, sell cabbage or onion soup at five centimes the bowl. They are kind and amiable, in spite of an appearance like the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. If you pass by, they call gently to you and ask you to treat some of the poorest customers standing round, in the hope of a little tip "from the swell." They disappear at daybreak, for they are birds of the night only, prototypes of the social night to which they belong. They can only earn 1.50 or 2 francs per day at the most.

The potato-stall keeper has for her habitual customers the poorest workgirls, the *trottins*, and apprentices to all trades. Often two friends are to be seen buying their lunch for four sous and eating it outside a wineshop. Here they drink a half-pint, and this constitutes their meal, especially on Mondays. These potatoes are generally quite appetising, in spite of being fried, as the story goes, in dogs' fat. If this is the case, how is a sufficient quantity to be found? However, that is the story. Do not, however, mention this to your friend the hawker, as you would be very likely to get a clout over the head with her frying-pan; she would tell you she would not think of using anything but pure lard. It seems that a long experience is required to turn out a good fry. The process demands great attention; a certain point has to be reached, and not on any account passed. It is tiring and unwholesome work, necessitating continual standing in front of the fire. The cook is exposed to draughts, to sudden showers of rain, and in summer to the heat of the sun. Then the potatoes have to be carefully guarded from dust, peeled in haste

when occasion serves, and watch has to be kept on the mischief-making street-boys. "It's a hard job, citizen," said an old potato-fryer of Belleville who had been through the Commune, and had even been deported to New Caledonia. "If only my good-for-nothing daughter would help me ; but she likes to amuse herself. And, when all's said and done, what does one get by it ? With bread and water; forty sous—fifty at most ! And then there are Sundays, when the bourgeoisie bring their own food out with them. Bad luck to them : if only the change would come !" One must add, however, that all the potato hawkers are not as revolutionary as this Belleville citizeness. Many come from the provinces, and their one desire is to go back when their husbands—perhaps railway porters or messengers at the market—retire from work.

Some potato-friers have their own special customers, for whom they cook *ragoûts*, fillets of beef, and bouillon carefully skimmed of grease. These dishes are either consumed on the spot or taken to be eaten at home. These delicacies are all cooked at the poor little stall and make a seductive smell. What a curious under-world these small trades suggest !

The coffee-stall keepers, who take up their positions under an archway or at the angle of a bridge at daybreak, prepare black coffee, or coffee with milk, in an iron pan over a charcoal furnace. Some of them use a percolator. The result is a curious drink, mostly chicory with brown sugar added ; and, if milk is used, this is liberally christened. Others have the audacity to make chocolate. What chocolate ! The customers are factory hands, workmen, small clerks who cannot afford the ordinary coffee-shop. Every one buys a small roll, and eats it standing at the stall while they gossip together. The stall-keeper pays special attention to her regular customers. She can often make 1.50 during the morning.

Then there are the hawkers of *sirop de calabre* (or, as

the workgirls facetiously call it, *sirop de cadavre*, but as this trade is only carried on in summer it does not merit special attention.

The keeper of the newspaper-stall holds, perhaps, the highest rank among these small traders ; for, first, she rents a kiosk ; next, she reads the papers. She is tidy and respectable-looking, and is almost always of a certain age. She wields considerable authority in the neighbourhood of her kiosk. She is generally very friendly with the *concierge* opposite, and long confidences are exchanged about the residents. She stays the whole day in her little glass cage, her feet on a *chaufferette*, skimming the most varied feuilletons and mixing up terrible adventures in her head—the scoundrelly Jewish banker marries the seduced girl, and the famous explorer who has escaped from cannibals loves the wicked duchess who poisons her victims. All the same, she is a virtuous person, quite a sensible woman, though a little romantic. Her business is uncertain, as she has formidable competitors in the street paper-boys. Still, she manages to make a living, especially when exciting things occur, such as sensational trials, elections, or patriotic festivals. She may indeed have her kiosk burned or rifled, as happens sometimes when Paris is amusing herself with a riot ; but happily this does not occur every day. The paper-stall keeper manages to earn on some days from three to eight francs.

We shall have finished with all the out-of-door hawkers when we have mentioned those who spring up on Sundays and holidays, and days in summer when it is fine. These go where the greatest crowds assemble : to the Champs-Élysées, where the nursemaids and children abound ; to Longchamps on race-days ; to the Buttes-Chaumont, to Montsouris, and to the outer boulevards. They sell gingerbread bonbons (*à la crasse*, as children call them), fruit, doubtful-looking cakes, lemonade, and syrup. They stand under a most primitive tin booth, or have simply a little

table on trestles. These irregular stallkeepers are of the poorest, their business is most uncertain, and their profits are not more than from one franc to five francs per day.

Amongst the regular stallholders the *fromagère* (cheese hawker) is the smartest and cleanest. She is fresh and amiable, wears a white apron with a bib, and large white full sleeves. With her hair carefully dressed and displaying a brooch and earrings, she moves about amongst the formidable mingled smells of *camembert*, *brie*, and *bondons*. With a charming air she offers bits of cheese at the end of a long knife for her customers to taste. She cuts up the butter, wraps it in cabbage leaves, and packs it into baskets with a refined manner, her little finger raised. She looks so calm and white that she seems to live entirely on the buttermilk which she sells in so many forms. Generally pretty, coquettish, and alluring, she brings a little poetry into the streets of Paris. She often has for a signboard a painting of cows, with green fields for background. Rollinat has sung deliciously of her in his *Névroses*, as he did of the tripe woman in his *Dixains réalistes*.

The herbalist lives in a little, dark, mysterious shop surrounded by equivocal objects for purposes more or less "shocking." Belts, bandages for hernia, pumps and other appliances for the sick-room, syringes, electric brushes; &c., are all spread out in confusion. She is stout and strong; speaks in a low tone; and ties up her parcels with grave discretion. Always living in the atmosphere of aromatic herbs, she is quite impregnated with mint, thyme, cinnamon; and a thousand extraordinary odours. She has something in her of the alchemist, the fortune-teller, and of a still more disreputable profession. A good many nefarious transactions take place behind her shop, including some illegal operations. All the servants of the neighbourhood consult her about their smallest ailments; and she practises her business with authority, recommending infusions, bouillon; borage, and fruit. She takes her patients to her back room;



examines their tongues, feels their pulses, and makes diagnoses. Sometimes the herbalist joins somnambulism to her medical functions. She goes into trances, thanks to the help of a confederate, and has an enormous reputation in the neighbourhood. To ensure safety she is only hypnotised in the evenings, when her shop is closed. She also tells fortunes by cards.

The baker is married and the mother of a family, and she possesses *écus*, as the song says. She sits at her counter; neatly dressed. She is sharp, has an affected manner with her customers, and is none too amiable, for she knows she is indispensable. She cuts four sous' worth of bread as if she were doing you a favour. She dislikes giving credit, and is terribly strict with her assistants. If she is pretty, she is cold and distant, except perhaps with a gentleman she considers absolutely *chic*. She is a great admirer of Georges Ohnet and adores the Opéra Comique, especially when *La Dame Blanche*, the *Dragons de Villars*, or other pieces within her comprehension are played. She does not care for things too *artistic*. One such, on talking over the *Roi d'Ys* with her neighbour the butcher, said, "That opera is ridiculous; one can't remember a single air." As the song says, the baker has *écus*; and, in fact, she makes money rapidly. She is a first-rate woman of business, preparing to be a first-rate bourgeoisie when the time comes to retire. She leads her husband, the flour man, who is always white and gentle, by the nose.

The confectioner is quite a fine lady. She deals in luxury and is almost at the top of the shopkeeping hierarchy. She sits at her counter in a silk dress, displaying a perfect arsenal of jewels, bracelets, and scent sachets. She is melting, obsequious, and wheedling; in fact, as like her caramels as possible. Often she is young and pretty; and then she indulges in mild flirtations with well-behaved gentlemen who come to buy *pralines* or preserved fruit for a theatre-party. On the other hand, she regards persons of her own sex as

rivals, and if they belong to the *demi-monde* she treats them with formidable coolness. She has round her three or four young ladies, neat, and inclined to be refractory; and she keeps a careful eye on them while pretending to be busy with her crochet-work. If one of them should be a little too responsive to a client's compliments she soon picks a quarrel with her and turns her off. She is a clever woman who knows where the wind blows. She no doubt has lovers whom she meets mysteriously, but she knows how to keep her reputation in the quarter, and even the *concierge* speaks of her respectfully. She is an excellent woman of business, soured in mind although her manner is sugary, and she has no dislike to scandalmongering. She likes theatres and restaurant suppers. If her clients happen to be aristocratic she affects conservative opinions. She has never given a bonbon to the little beggars who gaze with covetous eyes through her window. Her dearest dream is to be like the Comtesse de X—— or the Marquise de Z——, whom she reads of in the papers, and who buy at her shop. When she has made her fortune she intends to have a country house at Boissy-Saint-Léger or Vésinet. She will give garden parties. Her favourite author is André Theuriet, her favourite theatre the Gymnase, especially when the sweet *Abbé Constantin* is played. Her husband, a grave, quiet man, is never seen at her shop. She is too much afraid of her young ladies taking him from her. Her son is at the Lycée Stanislas, and her daughter at some school kept by secularised nuns. She sees very little of them, but they are growing up.

The *charcutière* (pork butcher) is a simple and less pretentious person than the confectioner; at the same time, she gives her assistants higher salaries. She is nearly always a fresh and attractive little woman whom it is a pleasure to see among her sausages, galantines, mountains of lard, and garlands of black-puddings.

Very clean and neat, she cuts thin slices of ham with a

delicate air and weighs them on the scales quite coquettishly. It is a pleasure to see her wrapping up her lard and *foie gras* in paper and distributing her gherkins to her customers. She is an honest creature; passive and happy. Her life is monotonous, without any incident or definite character. She seems to have been in her shop since the eighteenth century. *La belle charcutière* is a tradition. She is almost always a fat, sleepy brunette, whose large contented face is well framed by the white marble of her shop. The blonde *charcutière* is an exception. Her white apron and white sleeves tied up with blue ribbon make a becoming costume, contrasting with her pink complexion, so she is quite a seductive object to the passers-by.

The grocer and linendraper may be called the provincials of Paris. The enormous grocers' shops in all the large thoroughfares and the large establishments of *nouveautés* have reduced the trade of the small shops till they tend to disappear altogether. Those that still remain are tiny, meagre places, like the little shops in provincial towns. They are outside modern industrial progress. The women who keep them are austere, dressed in black; with thin, pinched lips, and have the traditional appearance of their ancestresses who were drawn by Gavarni or Henri Monnier.

The corset-maker has greater powers of resistance. She should have for her motto: "*Je maintiendrai.*" Her disappearance will not be yet, in spite of the competition of the great shops. Her strength lies, as she well knows, in her speciality of having studied feminine physiology and anatomy. When she speaks of ready-made corsets she says contemptuously, "Those steel corsets are impossible, dear Madame. They are quite infamous. They inflict lasting injuries on those who are foolish enough to wear them. Believe me, badly made corsets are the cause nowadays of many women's diseases and functional troubles." And she forthwith exhibits her own model corsets—those corsets of the latest fashion, recommended by the Faculty of Medicine; those light,

supple bones ; those yielding, satin cuirasses. She knows in detail all the bodily imperfections of her clients. " Ah," she says, " I see a great deal, if I could only talk ! " And she does talk, you may be sure ; those who reveal their imperfections to her are often betrayed. She is very pretentious, aping the knowledge of a woman of science, and she makes her fortune quickly. Towards fifty she retires to the country with Monsieur, frequently a journalist or a superior clerk in a shop, who, though he has made no figure in his own business, retires also on a fortune—made by his wife.

The milliner is the most typical of all the Paris shopkeepers, and one may regard as an axiom the saying, " There are *marchandes de modes* everywhere, but *modistes* are only to be found in Paris."

The modiste is not a workwoman ; she is a poet. One cannot compare a hat with a corset ; which must be a production of calculation and patience ; nor with a chemise, or even a petticoat. The hat is a product of the imagination—a work of art, a poem of taste. These light, fragile head-dresses are exquisite bits of work, like spiders' webs, and seem to have been put together by fairy fingers. Very often they are made hastily, designed by some caprice ; and these works of inspiration, spontaneously designed to suit the heads which are to wear them, are only to be seen in Paris.

Milliners are charming girls, gay and careless, who have been born with the vocation, the gift of combining what is pretty. They are generally slender and graceful, a little delicate-looking. They feel vaguely that they are the aristocracy of women's trades.

There are milliners by business and milliners by necessity. The first have been *trottins*, and have seen all sides of the business before being allowed to drape a toque or trim a hat. Thanks, perhaps, to the generosity of a lover, they have been able to open a shop at twenty-five or thirty

years of age, either by buying a *clientèle* or starting a business on the chance of making a connection for themselves.

The second class are young women who have lost their money, and who, having plenty of confidence in their taste, boldly set up for themselves either at home or in some modestly conspicuous shop. They have no fear of compromising themselves, as the milliner, for some unknown reason, never takes her own name. One sees Alexandrine, Marie Louise, Pauline, Berthe, Virginie, &c., over all the shops. These names have a charmingly familiar air which fits this pretty profession, and so long as the window is arranged with taste and variety, clients come and quickly multiply. The milliner ought to be young; a woman in the forties or fifties can hardly attain to the graces of this calling. After she is forty she retires with her savings to the faubourgs near Fontenay-aux-Roses or Lilas. She very seldom leaves her beloved Paris.

We will leave on one side many other types of Parisian shopkeepers, such as jewellers, dealers in second-hand clothes, underlinen, gloves, perfumery, umbrellas and parasols, note-paper, &c., and confine ourselves to those most important and conspicuous. It must be allowed that the charming and gracious Parisian shopkeeper, as she rises towards eminence in her trade, loses in simplicity and spontaneity. She spoils her natural manners by imitating those of women of a superior class without attaining their grace of breeding. She becomes greedy of gain, suspicious, tyrannical, and unjust to her employees. Her life hardens her; while her only interest, the passion for making money, sours and embitters a nature naturally good and affectionate.

We have only included in our review of tradeswomen the small shops. The women belonging to the larger ones take no part in their husbands' businesses. Madame Marie Sincère, in her remarkable work *La Femme au XIX<sup>ème</sup>*

*Siècle*, observes that the women of the higher business class are not distinguishable from the women of fashionable life. Their business in life is to demonstrate, by their power of spending, the prosperity of their husbands. They belong with their ostentatious luxury to the class which spends, and their extravagance may be counted as so much clever advertising.

They are consequently outside our picture, which is only concerned with the real workers, those who play a daily part themselves in their special businesses.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHOP ASSISTANTS

*Yesterday and to-day : The invasion of the large emporium :  
The large drapers' shops : Assistants at the counters :  
Women mannequins : Cashiers : Errand-girls*

THE type of the shop-girl which existed about 1840, so often described in books like *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, the type contemporary with *La Maison du chat qui pelote*, has not only been changed but has completely disappeared from Paris, and only exists in some quiet old-fashioned shops in the provinces. Large establishments, such as the Bon Marché, Louvre, Printemps, Trois Quartiers, Samaritaine, Gagne-Petit, and other *bonheurs des dames*, have formed a new set of commercial manners and customs, and by their system of collecting all their employees together in large barracks, there is little opportunity for any individuality, and, in consequence, their personalities have a remarkable uniformity. Formerly the shop-assistant was a young girl of from sixteen to twenty, in six cases out of ten coming from the provinces, for whom her parents paid a premium for her apprenticeship with a small and honest tradesman. When this term was at an end she was *au pair*, that is, she received board and lodging without salary, later she was raised to a small salary, on an increasing scale, until she reached the grade of *première*, with a salary varying from 150 to 200 francs per month. Sometimes she succeeded her employers when they retired, and became in her turn a tradeswoman—a comfortable and honest bourgeoisie, maintaining the traditions of her predecessors.

To-day this state of things has almost vanished, the small tradeswoman is replaced by those vast establishments where everything can be bought : furniture, saucepans, carpets, linen, hats, clothes, perfumery, toys—even sugar, flowers, and bonbons. There are also bazaars, which sell almost every domestic article at low prices. The day is not far off when the small tradespeople will have completely disappeared. The large shops which provide everything, or the establishments which specialise in some object, such as Latour, Raoul, Fretin, and others for boots and shoes, Boissier, Gouache, Siraudin for confectionery, the Cour Batave, Oudot, and the Maison de Blanc on the Boulevard des Capucines for lingerie and trousseaux, employ armies of assistants of both sexes. All these people are numbered and catalogued in special departments, and in the largest shops especially they feed in refectories, sleep in species of cells, answer to bells and regulations, pay fines, and in a few and rare establishments share in a very small way in the profits.

The feminine element is of course considerable and is rigorously graded by rules. It is drawn from Paris, from the provinces, or from foreign countries—composed of workgirls, *déclassées*, bourgeoises, poor governesses out of employment, and of sisters, daughters, and wives of old employees ; a veritable social kaleidoscope.

At the bottom of the scale there is the girl who is a sort of supernumerary, who runs errands, matches patterns, follows the customer about and carries her purchases, either in her arms or, sometimes, on a chair, to which she is harnessed. In some shops she is dressed in a black blouse with a yellow collarband, and ticketed with a number. These girls are either beginners or those who are too awkward or uneducated to sell at a counter—always on the move from one end of the shop to the other, and the servants of every one. The work is very hard and tiring, and they are exposed to every caprice of the customers and the constant observation of the inspectors and foremen.



They are paid from forty to sixty francs per month at the most. They take their meals after all the other employees and are sometimes lodged by the shop. Some of them are married to a shop-messenger. They are nearly always ugly, thin, and unhealthy-looking. In the shops of the faubourgs, such as the Tapis-Rouge, the Ville de St. Denis, the Ville de Lutèce, and the Montagnes Suisses, these poor girls are placed outside the door to attract passers-by to the shop, or to sell coupons, ribbons, or shoes.

In the winter they shiver, and are the victims of chilblains ; in summer they are stifled by the dust—hustled and pushed by the crowds who gather on sale-days. They are called *les demoiselles à la proposition*.

Next to these in the large shops is the *débitrice*, a young girl, or young woman, dressed in a black apron with a yellow border, and with a number on the collar. She is attached to the cashier's desk—she takes the goods from the assistant at the counter, and wraps them up for the customer. Her position is not attractive. She can expect no commission, and her monthly salary is from thirty-five to forty-five francs.

The *débitrice*, if she is not pretty, is often of a comical ugliness, which has its own charm.

After her come the assistants at the counter, amongst whom there are terrible jealousies. Some in the dress departments wear silk, are elegant and often pretty. They serve a superior class of customers, make a rigorous distinction between themselves and the assistants who sell shoes, lingerie, or peignoirs. These last are dressed in woollen material. The shoe assistants wear black aprons. One can guess at the hatred, gossip, &c., which arises from this state of things. They all receive equal salaries, however, and get their *guelte*, that is, from 1 to 3 per cent. on sales entered in a small book and given in at the cash-desk. They earn from fifty to sixty francs per month; including *guelte* it may be as much as 150 or 200 francs. They are boarded and lodged in the house, if they are not married or have no

homes in Paris. If they live in the house they must be in by twelve o'clock at night. They are free on Sundays, except when the next day is a sale; in some houses permission for a night off is given. They have no fixed contract, and are liable to be dismissed at twenty-four hours' notice if they displease the master or the foreman. They are forbidden to sit at the counter, even if they are unwell or exhausted. If they sit down they are fined; if they do not immediately put away the articles taken out, after the departure of the customer, they are also fined. In some places they are forbidden to talk to each other, even in a low voice.

Their day begins at eight in the morning and lasts till eight at night, with an hour for lunch and an hour for dinner, that is ten hours' hard work in a heavy and vitiated atmosphere, remaining on their feet all the time. They are usually pale and anæmic. To obtain the desired *guelte* what ardour, what devices to cajole the customers, what engaging eloquence they put into their work! The men employed are not very chivalrous to them, and do not hesitate to snatch a sale if occasion arises. They are so worn out by their work that they have not much energy left for amusements, though they are sometimes obliged to submit to the amorous caprices of the master or a foreman; they have little to do with the ordinary male employee. Moreover, in all the departments of these vast shops the sexes are kept severely separated in the refectories and other rooms, as well as at the counters.

The private lives of the assistants in these large shops is mysterious. Very few of them are married. Most have, outside their business, *liaisons* with men in positions very much above them. They cannot endure shop-assistants with their fatuous pretensions, and they confine themselves when in their company to a sort of superficial good-fellowship which does not extend beyond the shop. The same thing exists between actors and actresses—a pleasant confraternity

during working hours, but when these are over it is "*Bonsoir la compagnie!*"

Then these young ladies have their *messieurs très bien* who wait for them after business hours, and take them to the theatre, or to the country on holidays. All of them are terrified at the idea of maternity. If such a thing as an "accident" happens they are dismissed at once, with rare exceptions.

Many of these young women are very graceful and distinguished in appearance, especially the *mannequins*. But for some years past the *femme mannequin* has tended to disappear from the large drapery establishments, and is only to be seen at the high-class dressmakers'.

Here, in the beautiful rooms of the Rue de la Paix, or the Boulevard Haussmann, they display, from nine in the morning till seven in the evening, their young and slender figures. Graceful and charming, and dressed in beautiful clothes, which are paid for by angular Americans and stout wives of Jewish bankers, they show off their charming figures before their jealous customers, who would willingly enough buy not only the dress but the figure inside it.

In the evening, while the old gentlemen are feverishly promenading, they appear dressed with a style which makes men turn round to look, and middle-class women die of envy.

They are attractive to the eye, but haughty and cold, and very inaccessible to admiration. Slander accuses them of having extraordinary feminine attachments, and of living with a friend from the same counter or shop in a lasting intimacy. One cannot pretend to know the truth about this gossip, which probably arises from masculine jealousy. The girls have so much to endure from the powers that be, in their shops, that they may be excused for treating as their enemies men whom they regard only as tyrants and seducers.

Many of these pretty girls may be found at the nine o'clock receptions of women of a certain profession. They wish to remain independent and attractive, and prefer the

anonymity of these clandestine houses to the monotony of a regular connection with a jealous, despotic lover.

The saleswomen are under the forewoman. This is an imposing individual of from thirty-five to fifty, living outside, either unmarried or the wife of some foreman. She wields a despotic authority and consults with the managers of the shop regarding purchases and sales. Besides her salary, she gains a large percentage on the total annual profits. Some even earn as much as 7000 to 10,000 francs per annum, and never less than 3000 francs. Theirs is the highest rung of the ladder. The forewoman is meddlesome. She has her favourites and those she dislikes. She controls the conduct of the girls, is aggressive and contemptuous to those she suspects of bad behaviour, makes reports to the manager, and allows no excuses, unless one of the heads of departments shows a weakness for an assistant. She then shuts her eyes and allows interviews. She is much respected in her private life and rules her family, if not her husband and children, with a rod of iron, gives evening parties with tea and whist, and goes to the Palais Royal and Opera. Her ambition is to buy a house in the country. For this she saves, and puts every one on short rations. Nevertheless there must be leakages, as she is absent from home twelve hours in the day. She cannot take much part in the management of her household, which annoys her considerably, as at heart she is often a methodical stingy bourgeoisie who would like to count every farthing.

Besides the large drapers' shops there are many girls found in stationers' shops, glovers', bootmakers', perfumers', florists', tailors', confectioners', and pastrycooks'. At tea-time one has a chance of seeing the young ladies at the confectioner's who, one does not know why, are melancholy or serious, and who hand you your plate and *baba au rhum* with a distracted and bored air. At the New Year, or from December 20 to January 10, these young ladies are greatly

in demand, and every one who can be spared is pressed into the service of preparing bonbons, selling toys, and helping in the large shops, which are filled to overflowing with customers' orders.

Amongst other employees of shops still to be noticed there is one that demands particular attention—the cashier-clerk. She is a notable Parisian type whom one meets with pleasure in cafés, restaurants, and in different shops, and whose position inspires confidence. In some places nothing is demanded of her but good looks and dress, and the most elementary knowledge of figures. Her charming manners and smile are her great assets. She is the signboard, as it were, of the house.

In the less fashionable quarters the cashier takes the rank of a manager, and she must in consequence exercise authority, decision, power of observation—in fact, all the qualities of the mistress of the house who is the centre and the mainspring of all its activities.

This position, at once sedentary and active, is much sought after by ladies in reduced circumstances. The salaries vary from 1200 to 3000 francs a year, besides board and sometimes lodging. The lady cashier is not romantic: figures have a steadying influence on the imagination. She does not indulge in day-dreams, but in solid facts. Tied to her desk of oak or mahogany, she has favourites among the regular customers, and allows herself a little mild gossip. She is sharp with the errand-boys and clerks, and manipulates her cash machine in a businesslike way. *Ding, ding! "L'addition du!" Ding! "Voyez au salon bleu!" Ding, ding! "Fûtes, annoncez, s'il vous plaît!"* and other familiar phrases.

In certain businesses the manager consults with the cashier about his purchases. He relies on her judgment and acquaints her with all the details of the house. Kings have been known to marry shepherdesses, but it is still more usual for managers to marry their cashiers, whose intelli-

gence, activity, and businesslike qualities they have learnt to appreciate.

Amongst cashiers, the most conspicuous for her calm and modest appearance is the butcher's cashier. She is generally the real head of the shop. She has to conciliate the cooks, the maids-of-all-work, and the bourgeois. She must have an agreeable word and smile for each of these, and arbitrate in case of dispute between servants and the errand-boy. Gifted with an extraordinary memory, she knows how to speak to each customer: "Did you like your *gîte à la noix*, Mademoiselle," or "I hope the kidneys were tender, Madame," or "I hope, my dear, that you will not be vexed about the steak of yesterday," &c. &c.

In the "eccentric" quarters, the cashier at the butcher's will use the slang in current use, called *loucherbem*, and she will say, "*Lervesem lienbem, lelesmem* (*Servez bien, mademoiselle*), *un loubem de 'papa'* (beef) *à beldorone* (mamma)," and other phrases of butcher language, which she has heard from the errand-boys or her husband.

The lady cashier is a hard worker. She must be ready by eight o'clock in the morning and dressed with some care, or at least with her hair beautifully waved. Before she appears at her desk, she has numerous duties to fulfil behind the scenes—in the evening she is the last to leave, as she must balance her accounts, make her notes of her day's business, and give orders for the morrow. She does not always lunch at the manager's table, and, if business is heavy, she may be seen eating a hasty meal at her desk, keeping a watchful eye on the perpetual movement of the shop. She cannot often rest even on Sunday, as most of the provision shops, with the restaurants, keep open all day until six o'clock. One of her rare relaxations is to go to the country in her manager's dog-cart, and picnic on the grass with the staff. She comes back rather intoxicated, sometimes excited and a little uproarious, and remembers her day during all the week of hard work which follows.

Shop-girls, as well as the factory-workers, are victims of our social conditions. They have hard and tiring work and receive inadequate pay; they are fed, and therefore so far kept from want, but on the other hand they must be tidy and fairly well dressed, an obligation not laid on the factory girl.

It is painful to see how the shop-girls have diminished in numbers since the present custom has obtained of replacing them by men. In many cases, such as in the sale of gloves, dresses, feathers, veils, and perfumery, the change is an immoral one; in the other cases it is unjust, absurd, and contrary to all reason. It is certainly true that the majority of women customers prefer to be served by a man, but is that a proper reason? Is it even a moral one? Is it not rather shameful that it is called a natural one? The man who sells gloves, ties, haberdashery, chemises, silks, perfumery, is an effeminate creature, and out of his proper sphere. Women who are delicate, graceful, and subtle are in their proper place when selling flowers, chiffons, and perfumes.

Paris at the present day is full of youths who bear the nickname of *Soyeux* or *Calicot*. One is ashamed at seeing them in situations so humiliating for them and so suitable for women. But business is business—and lady customers like to be waited on by men. They prefer these scented Don Juans, who are on the look-out for adventures amongst their fair customers. Women seem to be no longer wanted amongst their own sex, who spend their time in cutting each other's throats!

## CHAPTER X

### GOVERNMENT SERVANTS

*Street sweepers : Government tobacco agents : The staff of the hospitals : Sisters and lay nurses : Railway clerks : Telephone and Post Office clerks : Typewriters*

"WOMEN nowadays," says Collette Yver, "vex the souls of sensible people by their ambition to take all sorts of positions unfitted to them by nature—from an advocate's seat in a court of justice to that of a cabdriver. No one desires to be judged by a council of ladies, or to be driven along a precipice by even the most skilful of lady drivers. For certain functions, coolness, even indifference, is necessary; for others, a strong biceps. If women could be suddenly endowed with this glacial attitude, or those muscles of iron, they would be the losers and not the gainers."

In small positions and clerkships, women can easily find employments which oust nobody, and where their special qualities find scope.

Women Government clerks! The expression sounds oddly to the ear. The question immediately arises, "What is meant by the term?" Certainly not the employment of women by the State in its greater industries, but the large army of women in the Post Office, the railways, the hospitals, and the theatres.

In examining some of these Government posts we must begin with the lowest, that is, the women employed in the work of the sewers; the early morning street sweepers. The street sweepers are the odd nocturnal beings who do their work between three and four o'clock in the morning. Has



any one ever seen them in broad daylight? One would think that from some strange feeling of decency the Government allows them only to be visible at night. You have met them in the early dawn in the streets and boulevards, covering the whole surface of the deserted pavements with their brooms, which they manipulate with a slow, semicircular sweep. They move slowly and conscientiously, sweeping into the gutter bits of paper, dead leaves—the thousand bits of rubbish, still warm from the feverish whirl of the past day. Sometimes they pause, leaning on their brooms, enjoying a pinch of snuff, or chewing a quid of tobacco in a melancholy fashion. They are strong though sickly creatures, clothed in greyish rags—taciturn and silent. They are recruited from Luxemburg and Belgium, and are mostly from thirty to fifty years of age. In the daytime they sell odds and ends of rubbish. Some of them are chair-menders or basket-makers, others work at rope-making. They live at Belleville, Charonne, and the Butte aux Cailles. They earn 1.50 per day, but they are subject to fines, which the inspectors are not chary of inflicting.

The tobacco shops are under the Government. Perhaps no trade varies so much in its *personnel* as the tobacconist's. If the shop is in the Avenue de l'Opéra, on the Boulevard, or in the neighbourhood of the Madeleine, the shopkeeper is young and pretty; she has regular customers, for whom she chooses cigars. She has admirers, and sometimes she takes a silly and empty-headed man from the clubs as her lover. Daintily dressed, she follows the fashions, and lavishes smiles and attentions on her customers. But if you only buy four sous' worth of tobacco, or a box of matches, you will be served roughly, with a contemptuous smile. The tobacco agent is provided with her board, and receives fifty or sixty francs per month. Occasionally she has a percentage on her sales. In the popular quarters she is often the wife of an influential elector, who keeps a small café. She sells quantities of *crapulos* and *infectados* (cigars at seven or eight

centimes), besides tobacco sold to workmen for chewing. She damps the tobacco carefully to increase its weight, looks closely at the money given her to change, and leaves you waiting while she serves out a drink, keeping a constant coming and going between the two counters. Another adds a little grocery business to the tobacco. In this case she is helped by a sister or a daughter.

The most celebrated tobacco shop in Paris is La Civette, in the Place du Palais-Royal. A magnificent clerk sits at the cash-desk, as on a throne. On the right is a large counter exclusively for cigars; on the left is sold smoking tobacco and snuff and packets of cigarettes. Six young ladies dressed in black assist. A legend, going back as far as the old monarchy, relates that at the Civette are to be had the best rappee, the most perfect *caporal*, and the least bad cigars at two sous in Paris.

The lay staff of the hospitals includes the wardmaids, the probationers, and the superintendents. The wardmaids do all the hard work. They sweep, make the beds (as badly as possible), distribute and change the plates at meal-times, cut up the bread, and live in a perpetual state of hostility to the probationers, with whom they desire to be on an equality. From this feeling arise continual quarrels and complaints, in which the patients are often compelled to take part, to their great disadvantage.

The wardmaids are strong girls from the country, stupid, coarse and rough, inconceivably awkward, if by an evil chance they are called upon to give any help to a patient. Their aim is to get through their work as quickly as possible, to meet and gossip in their refectory. They are inveterate beggars, and are always on the look-out to wring a few sous from the patients. Everything must be paid for—a commission, a letter to the post; they smuggle in tobacco and alcohol—in spite of a rule which absolutely forbids gratuities. They are utterly indifferent to the patients, as are nine out of ten of all the lay hospital assistants.

One of our friends knew an unfortunate man with a wound

in the leg, unable to go to the lavatory, and who for three days asked in vain for a basin of water—he had no money. The wardmaids are boarded and lodged at the hospital. They earn twenty to twenty-five francs per month, and they have a free day once a fortnight.

The probationers (*boursières*) are young girls of from twenty to twenty-five. Very often they are pretty. They have influence, and are recommended to their posts. They receive some rudimentary training in dispensing, obstetrics, and medicine, also in dressing and bandaging. In theory they are on the same footing as the wardmaids, but not in practice. As the superintendents are recruited from their ranks they receive superior consideration. Their duties are to give out the medicine, &c., at fixed hours, to renew dressings, to apportion to the patients their proper food, and to watch the serious cases at night. They are required to make the rounds frequently, to watch the dying, lay out the dead, open and shut the windows at fixed hours, and see that everything is clean. They fulfil these duties with great indifference. If they dislike a patient they manage to forget the hour for his medicine, and it is a lucky chance if they do not make mistakes and poison some poor creature committed to their care.

These statements are not exaggerated, and may be proved any day in every hospital in Paris. The probationers spend most of their time laughing and flirting with the house-surgeons, dressers, or visitors. In this they are particularly successful. They do not behave much better during the doctor's visits; and as they pay little or no attention to his orders, it is not surprising if they make blunders. They take their meals outside, except when they are on duty, which is twenty-four hours in three days, and sleep at home except when on night duty. They are dressed like the wardmaids and superintendents, in a black dress, white apron with bib, white sleeves, and a white cap with white bow. The head superintendents have a black bow on the cap.

Their name of *boursières* comes from the remuneration, called a *bourse*, given by the Municipal Council, of 125 francs per month. They have a free day once a week. When they are on night duty they take part in convivial parties given by the house-surgeons, and have a gay and merry time. In a certain hospital which we will not name, where a poet friend was a patient, the house-surgeons and *boursières* on Shrove Tuesday romped in fancy dress through the wards where men were dying—a most edifying spectacle.

The superintendent is an old probationer nominated after several competitive examinations. She has the direction of a ward and entire command of all the male and female staff attached to it, under the control of the house-surgeon. Her duties are not heavy, consisting only in the distribution of wine and the dressing of some cases where the relatives have paid her specially. She is, as a rule, a sharp, scolding, authoritative person. She has no love for the *boursières*, and annoys them as much as possible. She worries the wardmaids without any mercy. She has a small room to herself at the entrance of the ward, where she keeps her notes and where she retires to gossip with the superintendents of the other wards. She, like all the others, has no real compassion in her. She does what is strictly necessary—nothing more; she has no love for her patients. Her profession is, for her, both dull and disagreeable—and she takes all the hours of liberty she can get. She is often married, and receives a salary of about 1200 to 1600 francs a year. Like the probationers, she leaves the task of laying-out the dead to the wardmaids. We are not exaggerating the state of things, and moreover it is quite comprehensible—these women have their interests outside the hospital, their family, their friends; they go out often; they draw a salary necessary to them for their living. It is therefore a logical conclusion that they are not specially enthusiastic about a very depressing profession, which demands constant devotion of the most exalted kind.

This disinterested devotion is found in the hospital Sisters. They are not influenced by any earthly consideration ; they do not even themselves receive the very small pay allotted to them ; it belongs to the Order. They therefore love their patients, and treat them like great children, and are gentle, gay, and patient with them. They rise in the night, go from bed to bed, shake up the pillows, give medicines, help the cripples to move their positions, change their linen when necessary, and all without the least repugnance, and with comforting words and soft gestures. If they are a little over-enthusiastic sometimes on the subject of the Sacraments, there are many patients who will go to Mass to please them. The working classes in France are fundamentally irreligious, but they think "if it can't do any good, it can't do any harm either."

Our opinion is, that the secularisation of the hospital is a mistake. The Sisters (inspired as they are by a supernatural hope, which in the opinion of some is an absurdity, but which, like all disinterested motives, is to be respected) are alone capable of doing good in these hells of pain and despair called hospitals. There are no more Sisters, alas ! in the Paris hospitals, except in the Hôtel Dieu.

While charitable men and women are trying with a heroism and devotion against all proof to ameliorate the condition of women's labour, with a result which, one must confess, is very inadequate to the effort, progressive people, and particularly Americans, have created, more or less consciously, considerable fields of activity for women. Edison, with his telephone, provided them with a kind of official position, and the number of girl telephone clerks who work in offices all over the world amounts to hundreds of thousands.

Another discovery still more favourable to women in the sense that, according to her desire and her means, she can keep a relative independence, was made towards 1867 by

Remington in the United States. This was the typewriting machine, completely developed during the last few years, which at this moment, if the statistics are correct, provides well-paid occupation to about 600,000 typists, of whom about 300,000 are employed in the United States or in England and her colonies.

The number of typewriters in France, and particularly in Paris, has increased considerably during the last ten years. The machine was long in being introduced into Paris. It is only now that it has become usual in Government offices, trades, businesses, and with literary men. Its use is much appreciated, above all when besides rapid typewriting the girls know shorthand, which enables letters to be swiftly dictated when too long to be taken down directly on the machine. *Sténo-dactylographes* (stenographers), when first they were employed, could obtain valuable situations as the competition was small. Many of them were paid 200 or 300 francs per month for an average day's work of nine hours. At the present moment, as the numerous schools of stenography pour out thousands of pupils, the positions are not so good, and the time is approaching when the salaries will be very small. The supply will exceed the demand.

Stenographers are well educated, intelligent, and industrious. They come from the same class as governesses out of employment, bourgeois in poor circumstances, and girls who have lost their fortunes. They are excellent, clear-headed secretaries, and make themselves extremely useful. One may say that many of them are superior in education, refinement, and subtlety of ideas to those who employ them. They form in Paris an army of young girls and women whose conditions make an interesting study. They might unite themselves into a union, but the best-informed among them say they are too jealous of each other to do so with any success.

The post or telephone clerk is a young girl, or young

woman who has passed her examinations, of impeccable morality, or at least above suspicion. After several months of trial without salary, she is considered efficient, and starts with a salary of 900 francs a year, which increases after ten years to 1800. This is the highest salary she can earn. Such a sum would be quite insufficient for her wants if she did not often take work home with her in the evenings. This extra work perhaps brings in fifteen francs per month. Her ambition after serving her time at the central office is to be sent to an office in the provinces, less under supervision, and perhaps more amusing.

The telephone clerk, with her ears glued all day to the receiver, has often been made the subject of farce. She hears all manner of things, and must be familiar with strange and comical human documents. It is a marvel how she exists, repeating the frightful "Hallo ! Hallo !" all day, and repeated a million times a day into her ear. A study of her would make a long and interesting chapter, but as she represents a new profession and affects ultra-modern tastes, journalists and novelists have already made a fairly exhaustive study of her.

The railway clerk, that bureaucrat whom we have all seen behind her grating, presents no points of sufficient interest to merit picturesque description.

Theatre attendants may be considered as Government servants, as their situations are open to the same competition as all the Government posts. These attendants have been candidates long before they are chosen by the directors. They must make countless applications, advance a security of 500 francs, which is often swallowed up by a failure, and when at last they are accepted, thanks to the support of a literary man or journalist, their evenings at the theatre bring them in a fair profit, even if only as supernumeraries.

At the Vaudeville, Variétés, Nouveau-Cirque, and Nouveautés, each attendant can make four or five francs

every evening without including little profits, such as bouquets, notes from the house to the stage, bonbons from the foyer, &c. &c.

At the Porte St. Martin or the Ambigu, their receipts do not exceed three francs or two francs fifty centimes; at the Beaumarchais they fall to two francs, and on the outer boulevards they are still less.

The "tip" claimed by the attendant is a gross imposition. One must hope for the day when our theatres will be larger and better organised, and when we may be able to dispense with these useless attendants, as in the United States, and also in England.

The theatre attendant is recruited from all classes, including the *déclassée*. They are therefore in sympathy with lovers of the stars "behind," and willingly undertake amorous messages. They climb to the heaven beyond the lights and bring back to their admirers the oracular replies from goddesses behind the scenes.

Formerly the attendants were often young and pretty, but as the positions are lucrative and entail years of waiting, the actual possessors become old and ugly before they retire, and to-day the pretty young attendant is almost a myth.

The attendant hates the gallery, all her interest is centred on the *baignoires*, where lovers, who are always generous, sit almost hidden from view. Her private life is mysterious. Many during the day work in factories, others as charwomen. Others again simply keep their own homes in order. They are respected in their own quarters of the town, as Parisians love everything belonging to a theatre; moreover they distribute favours in the shape of free tickets. Their friendship therefore is not despised by a class as fond of a free pass as the economical and frivolous bourgeois.

Sometimes the attendant finds a generous spectator who gives her two, three, or five francs. It is said that Gambetta never occupied a *baignoire* without giving twenty francs to the attendant. Fallières is not so *chic*.



Women employed by the Government, as may be seen, are not very numerous in Paris. This is to be regretted, and in consideration of the enormous variety of different Government posts, not easy to understand. M. Baudrillart, in June and July of 1862, *i.e.* more than forty years ago, discussed this subject in the *Journal des Débats*. He asked for the admission of women to many posts from which they are unjustly excluded, and he expressed his views with great good sense and good feeling.

The Government depots for the sale of tobacco and postage stamps employing women, are satisfied with the result of their experiments. Their example might be followed in twenty other departments where women would with great advantage replace men, who have not the necessary qualities for the posts they fill. But there are few countries where the distance between the cup and the lip is as great as in ours. Many are generous and enthusiastic enough to take up a noble cause, and defend it in speech and writing, but alas ! the putting it into practice is almost impossible by reason of tradition and prejudice.

We make projects, speak glibly of them, write still more glibly on charitable and benevolent ideas—but when the time for action comes, the will is dead and routine triumphs over innovation. It will come, however, but so late in the day that many generations of women will have lived without seeing the dawn of a new era of practical reform. Men's chivalry is so little displayed in anything beyond love and flirtations.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARTISTS AND BLUESTOCKINGS

*Cesare Lombroso's theories : Women's intellectual faculties :  
How artists are educated : Pupils at studios : Copyists  
at the Louvre : Women painters : Bluestockings :  
Literary women : Books and newspapers : Authors com-  
pared with Bluestockings*

THE intellectual faculties of women have never been so much discussed as they are to-day. After the studies made by Proudhon, Ernest Legouvé, Michelet, Belouino, J. de Marchef-Girard, we have had the works of Paul Rousselot, Mantegazza, Dr. H. Thulié, Mme. Romieu, and many others much more recent, all endeavouring to raise the moral standard and social condition of women.

The physiological and psychological condition of the feminine brain has been discussed at great length, and also its special aptitudes for letters and the arts. Proudhon declared that woman is only receptive, and that she only becomes productive by her influence on man in ideas and real life. Michelet, in his *Education*, said that woman is only a harmony, as man is essentially a worker and producer, and Legouvé was of opinion that woman is an artist by her temperament, impressionable as all artists are—an exact and precise instrument—and that she feels and exhibits the most imperceptible variations of atmosphere in the world of sentiment. All, however, are agreed that from the earliest times to the present, no great work has been signed by a woman's name. In the fine arts, no immortal picture or statue has been produced by a woman. In music, no

woman has composed an opera or sonata which can be fitly called a masterpiece. In dramatic art, no authoress has written a tragedy or comedy beyond the mediocre, and in history there has never been a Tacitus or a Thucydides in petticoats.

D'Aurevilly in his *Bas-Bleus* truly says : "Être original dans le sens profond du mot, et, après l'avoir pensé, bâtir un livre dans la puissance équilibrée de son harmonie, voilà le signe de la virilité en littérature, et nulle femme ne l'a, et *ne peut* l'avoir." ("To be original in the profoundest sense, and after thinking out a book to build it up in well-balanced harmonious power, is the sign of virility in literature, and no woman has this power, nor can she have it.")

It must be conceded that history bears out this statement. "There have been, here and there, a few anomalies in history, but this one in particular has been spared us. We have no record of women Homers, Sophocles, or Shakespeares. You will find Sapphos who utter a few immortal cries, some saintly souls like Theresa, who leapt into heaven as Sappho leapt off Leucas, but literary genius, in its highest expression, means something more than eloquent emotion or sublime palpitations. Woman is always even as Eve, coming from man; she is a *receptivity* (as they say in German), the reverberation of something, the echo and reflection from some one else, the chameleon who takes on our colours, and gives them back to us." Thus speaks D'Aurevilly. One might mention Mary Somerville in the realm of physical science; Mme. de Staël, George Eliot, George Sand in literature; Rosa Bonheur and Mme. Lebrun in art. But do they draw us up to the heights as do Newton and Michelangelo?

What is the reason of this absolute lack of genius properly so called among women? Is it to be attributed to social conditions, or to the ignorance in which women are kept, or to the obstacles of all kinds that beset them? The question is

a most difficult one. M. Cesare Lombroso, the celebrated Italian physiologist, whose studies are so audacious and whose conclusions are so strange, has lately, in *L'uomo di genio*, described the difference between genius and talent, and denies genius to women, for the following reasons :

"In all vertebrate animals," he says, "the female is inferior to the male in intellect. The æsthetic sentiment is apparent primarily in the males. In singing birds, the male alone sings. Darwin has noticed that in monkeys the feeling for music is more developed in the males. Among certain insects, such as ants and bees, the superiority of the female is only evidenced at the expense of sexuality, that is to say, that the bee is queen only in so far as she ceases to be female." In this connection M. Lombroso has tried to demonstrate the insensibility of women, or at least their inferiority, in sensations of touch and of pain. Her inferiority in the arts and in intelligence he explains by this insensibility.

"Another cause," he says, "which forbids genius in women is that genius is demonstrated by invention. Now the essential characteristic of woman is misoneism. She does not care for new things : she preserves for long the customs and beliefs which men have outgrown. Spencer had already remarked that women rarely criticise existing things. In politics her influence is conservative. In short, her imitative sense is highly developed. Now the gift of imitation develops at the expense of originality, which is one of the characteristics of genius. It is the lot of woman to have less keen senses and less active brains, but nature gives her an ennobling compensation.

"The functions of maternity absorb her activity—they must of necessity do so. If we think of the enormous physical and moral importance of this function, of the psychical and organic sacrifice demanded from the mother in child-birth, it must be seen that maternity is of necessity the basis of her mental and physical composition, and that

it even endows her with certain anatomical peculiarities. In the function of maternity, we must look for the explanation of the inferior sensibility of woman. Her organism in spending so much vital force on the perpetuation of the race has not sufficient strength left to attain to the muscular and nervous development to which man owes his organic and psychic superiority."

For these reasons, genius is rarely found in women, and when found it is less intense than the genius of man.

The curious and paradoxical physiologist even goes so far as to say that there are no women of genius, and that if they manifest it, it is by some trick of nature, in the sense that they *are men*. Edmond de Goncourt had already expressed this view, but Cesare Lombroso develops it, and tries to prove that Mme. de Staël, George Eliot, and George Sand were men in physique, in voice, in gesture, and in all the manifestations of their activities. This extreme view, although crude, touches on a great truth. Genius in women is chiefly confined to the emotions, and rarely ascends to the higher regions of thought. Further (and I think this theory has not been broached before), one of the conditions of genius is solitude. Most great men have been solitary spirits. Women cannot live alone, they need support, moral contact, and above all they need expansion, tenderness, friendship. No woman of talent has been quite able to bear solitude. St. Theresa herself loved to receive visits from the outside world at the beginning of her secluded life, and she gave to St. John of the Cross the names of son and disciple.

Women have a predisposition to react against extraneous ideas, and at the same time to be influenced by them. In the highest forms of art they express themselves with feeling, delicacy, subtlety, and ingenuity, but rarely with originality. They excel chiefly in miniatures, in flower-painting, in the novel, in letter-writing and conversation, in a word, where feeling, wit, and delicacy predominate.

The twentieth century will witness the emancipation of women in art and letters. We are at the dawn of a new era, which will give facilities to women for the development as far as possible of their intellectual faculties. At no other epoch have their talents for painting, sculpture, and above all, literature, been as considerable as at the present day. Women authors, painters, and musicians have multiplied during the last twenty years in bourgeois circles, and even in the *demi-monde*. In painting especially they do not meet with the violent opposition they endured in former times. One may even say that they are too much in favour, too much encouraged by the pride and ambition of their families, for they threaten to become a veritable plague, a fearful confusion, and a terrifying stream of mediocrity. A perfect army of women painters invades the studios and the Salons, and they have even opened an exhibition of "women painters and sculptors" where their works monopolise whole galleries. The profession of a woman painter is now consecrated, enrolled, and amiably regarded; the girl of a bygone age, who made her own dresses and hats, who cooked jams, and attended to her devotions—the modest flower proposed to candidates for matrimony; this young girl without fortune, educated by her mother in excellent principles of order and economy, is now only to be found in distant provincial places where good traditions still flourish.

The contemporary little bourgeoisie does not shine nowadays by her domestic virtues. To the proposer for her hand nothing is said about whether she can cook or whether she has any vague notions of needlework, or any inclinations towards housekeeping, but he is assured that she is a wonderful musician, reading the most difficult Wagner score at sight, that she draws in pastel like Rosalba, executes landscapes like Corot, paints miniatures like Isabey, and that her studies from the life are the admiration of her teachers MM. Jules Lefèvre, Carolus Duran, or Gervex. They even imply that at a pinch she could, if she would, make money

out of her work, and that in such uncertain times as the present it is an excellent thing for a woman to have an occupation, and be able if necessary to maintain herself by her art and her work.

Among these young prodigies, these wonderful little phenomena who challenge the glory of Rosa Bonheur, there are very few who get beyond feeble sketches, or who show any interesting personality. Most of them, in spite of long study, only produce, after great exertion, dreadful green studies from nature, flowers in the style of Madeleine Lemaire, or draw countless pastel portraits before which parents gaze open-mouthed, overwhelmed with admiration for the child's genius.

Those who soar above the commonplace, and who do not get their heads turned by their families, the intellectual spirits who, like Marie Bashkirtseff, despise the imperfections of mediocrity, sometimes realise their dreams and produce most interesting work. There are at present in Paris about fifty young women painters of real talent, whose pastels, water-colour portraits, miniatures, landscapes, and pretty sentimental allegories, show sufficient vigour and delicate talent to make one forget the dreadful daubs of their numerous fellow-painters.

Let us come now to their education, and show how these young, energetic and graceful artists are formed.

Mme. Romieu (Marie Sincère) has given us a little sketch of the girl artist. Let us examine the different phases of her special education, scarcely known to the general public.

"If the girl," she says, "is too poor to attend a studio, free schools and all kinds of classes for her art are open to her. But the studio really forms the artist. For the sum of twenty-five or thirty francs per month, the pupils can spend the whole day at the studio. They arrive at eight or nine in the morning, and stay until four or six in the afternoon. The master, generally a painter of merit,

visits his pupils twice or three times in the week. He examines the work of each in turn and makes his comments. He has no sort of control over them, and does not even live in the house in which his studio is situated. The pupils gain most of their experience from each other. A studio is a kind of mutual school and, in spite of the lack of supervision, it is very orderly. The pupils answer (as it were) for each other's conduct. As pupils are of all ages, there are not the same drawbacks that might arise were they all young girls. There are married women, young girls, and children. A child of ten or twelve years sits next to a woman of thirty. As to the social position of the women, there are daughters of artisans, of business men, of tradespeople; often daughters of retired military men, and girls of a higher class whose parents have the good sense to send them where they can study with professional artists. Young girls of position and fortune are more or less numerous, according as the studios are more or less fashionable. The studios are less noisy than one might suppose. Women of all ages are inclined to be on their guard and reserved with each other. There is seldom the same camaraderie as is found in men. Some friendships are formed, but not many. Those who come early bring their lunch, which in winter they eat sitting near the stove. Here they talk a little, and also in the occasional intervals for rest. They stroll about, looking at each other's work. These intervals are pretty frequent, as with some the work is not very assiduous, but the girls who really wish to be artists work with great industry."

There are two classes of studio for painting. In one, landscape is exclusively taught; in the other, the figure. In the latter, models sit twice a week. In the former, which are the most fashionable, the winters are spent in making sketches, studying detail and flowers, and in the summer they adjourn to the country to sketch in the open air. The studios for the figure are full of plaster casts, designs for decoration, busts, and anatomical drawings. Landscape



studios are plainer and emptier. Girls in society generally devote themselves to landscapes and flowers.

Many of these pupils become, after many disappointments, copyists at the Louvre, and may be seen there any day, working at *Assumptions* or *Descents from the Cross* for country churches. Others go to the print department at the Bibliothèque Nationale to copy rare pieces or illuminated missals.

The livelihood of these copyists is precarious. How do they live? How much do they receive for the mediocre works executed with so much patience and courage? Who orders these pictures? For what use are they intended? All these are insoluble problems. The older copyists are mostly silent. Their aspect is forbidding, needy, depressing. They spend their lives in attempting to extract a spark from the inspiration they interpret, and they do not see the frightful abyss that separates their work from its model. They have the blindness of the feeble and mediocre; their very blindness is their strength and helps them to live, they believe themselves to be unrecognised, but they love their work. It is fair to say that some have real talent and a scrupulous care in rendering detail.

Many women distinguish themselves in flower painting, in *genre*, in still life, in miniatures. They never excel in landscape: why, one cannot say.

Women sculptors, who can count among their number the Princesse Marie d'Orléans, Mlle. Fauveau, Mme. Lefèvre-Deumier, Mme. Clovis Hugues, Sarah Bernhardt, and Mme. Besnard, have not so far shown any remarkable talent. The plastic art does not seem to suit them.

We will not enter into descriptions of those who have made their name, whose studios are open to Tout-Paris, who are treated by society like spoilt children. It would be outside the scope of this work to discuss personalities. One may remark, however, that the recognised artist is more agreeable, a better companion and less of a *poseuse* than the unrecognised painter struggling for notoriety.

The last named believes tremendously in herself. She is impossible to live with, and is a great cause of suffering to her husband or lovers. She is irritable, restless, egotistical, and art (which she calls "her art"), of which she is always talking, has deprived her of all feminine grace, all playfulness and youth, all in fact which makes women charming. In the country there is no poetry left, she only searches for studies. If one speaks of any sentiment, she talks of *values, tones, and compositions*. In her studio she is worse; she thinks only of her canvases, her rough sketches, her future exhibits, the frames she has to get, the notices she must obtain. She is a terribly tedious person, for she forgets her sex and her natural qualities, and affects airs of superiority, which are justified neither by her natural talent nor her acquired dexterity.

The similar fault of *la femme de lettres de petite marque* is her grotesque assumption of masculine airs, not seeing that she is losing the advantages nature has given her. One might say with some reason that literary work deforms the usual nature of a woman just as physical labour deforms the body. This brings us to discuss Bluestockings and learned women. There is an appreciable number of literary women at this moment in France. Not less than 3500 women are engaged in some sort of literary work: 2800 write novels or books for children, 200 are engaged in works on education, and 350 in poetical work; the remainder imitate the others. Of the 3500 only 1500 belong to the Société des Gens de Lettres and about 50 to the Société des Auteurs dramatiques.

As to those that write for newspapers, there are 237, but of this number at least 220 must be deducted, who only contribute to the fashion papers. There remain therefore only 7 or 8 actual journalists, and these alone are of any interest.

Of these 3500 scribblers how many have real talent? If this question is asked, one replies, "All of them!" But one's

own opinion may be reserved. The question of literary women has preoccupied many thoughtful persons of the present day, and there are few writers of eminence who have not been called upon to form an opinion. The greatest antagonist of the lady author was our much regretted friend J. Barbey d'Aurevilly, who in his mordant and contemptuous style described the ravages of the learned woman on contemporary society.

"Women who write are no longer women," he cried, "they are men (at least in their own estimation) and failures at that. They are Bluestockings, and the Bluestocking is masculine; and they have all, more or less, denied their sex. Even their vanity is not feminine. The vanity of a woman is often pleasing, but from this another kind of vanity has arisen which has swamped the first and is as hideous as impotent pride. The Bluestockings received their name in London in the time of Pope. It signified the women who were too much preoccupied with intellectual things to attend to their dress, and who wore stockings like common scholars. They have not changed since Pope's day. The first result which followed their jealousy of men's genius was that they lost their own; that genius for dress in virtue of which they are—or should be—both poets and poems. The second was that they lost the right to the respect which is due to their sex. Observe, mesdames, when you dare to become an amazon you must not fear the massacre on the Thermodon. The name is English, but the Bluestockings belong to all countries. They merely require a pen, a writing-desk, and some false pride. Until recent times they scarcely existed in France, the country of the Salic Law, but of late they have multiplied there to such an enormous extent that they surpass in numbers those in other countries in Europe. In former times, when one like Madame de Scudéry was found, she was regarded as a portent of ugliness in the country of elegance and grace. Let me not be misunderstood: the women of the blue

salon at the Hôtel de Rambouillet were not Blue-stockings. They were *précieuses*—insupportable creatures to whom Molière in the piece he named after them very sensibly administered much the same sort of castigation as Mascarille's porters did when they beat him with the poles of the chair. They came near being Bluestockings but the stockings were always of silk—white or pink.

“Mme. de Sévigné, on the other hand, can write charming gossip to her daughter, and Mme. d'Aulnoy her delightful fairy tales without being Bluestockings. No! Bluestockings are *women of letters* who traffic in literature. They are women who believe they have the brains of men, and demand a share of publicity and fame. They are of very recent growth in France, and it has required all the changes which have taken place since the Revolution to make women, who are neither hunchbacked, nor ugly, nor childless, place themselves on an equality with men, and to make men, become as effeminate as themselves, have the baseness to allow it.

“For they have allowed it—they have done worse—they have accepted it. They have recognised as legitimate the pretensions of women to be their intellectual equals, and if in theory they have not fully accepted the idea, most of them in practice have spoken as if they admitted it, even those who by their special knowledge have the greatest experience of the human mind. How many critics, for instance, in France have declared that Madame Sand is a genius? Chateaubriand himself, who finally lost all his illusions, was weak enough to descend to this flattery. This attitude of men towards women's ambition is simply cowardice. There are many determining influences, but the first is the influence of the ruling principle of the century, crudely but clearly established by the French Revolution and always raging within the limits in which Napoleon (who knew the monster's power) enclosed it—the principle of Equality, which at its appointed time will break its prison.

*"Civil and political equality are only relative equalities—a mere instalment for those who want to take everything—in the name of principles which are absolute. At the present time minds are occupied with another kind of equality altogether, and women, who are regarded as prophetesses, foresee it, instigate it, and demand it on their own account."*

Barbey d'Aurevilly, in his terrible attack on women authors, has marked the Bluestockings with the red-hot brand of his powerful arguments. This admirable writer, who had a profound devotion to letters, a devotion like that of an ascetic saint to his religion, a sort of esoteric passion for literature, had no prejudice or abuse in his denunciations. He thinks that woman, who is made for maternity, if not for love and devotion, cannot understand this religion of literature, this almost sacred vocation, which is, not less than hers, a symbol of complete renunciation. He thinks she cannot give herself without reserve to this intense devotion, which must absorb her whole nature. He regards the love of letters as the shirt of Nessus, which, once put on, can never be discarded, and it seems to him improper that woman—frivolous, light, inconstant—should alight like a bird on this land of the faithful and flit about the furrows of its strenuous husbandmen.

D'Aurevilly was in a sense the Torquemada of the art of literature, and he longed to burn or pillory all unworthy aspirants and false devotees. Women, to him, were in the first rank of the spoilers. He had made a close study of these charming jugglers with their extraordinary powers of assimilation, who without any profound study, and with complete unconsciousness of their theft, give bad money in literature by their skill in false coining.

He had observed that the pretentious and unsexed Blue-stocking is not original, and that all women's work betrays a masculine influence. "Look at the style," he said, "and you will find the man. In the development of Mme. Sand's

literary talent, you will see that each period of her manner corresponds to the intellectual influence of the *liaison* of the moment. She reflects first Jules Sandeau and Alfred de Musset, then Michel de Bourges, Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, Chopin and others, whose personalities were like a mosaic on the groundwork of this provincial pseudo-genius. In Mme. de la Fayette's *Princesse de Clèves* one can see the imprint of her daily conversations with La Rochefoucauld."

Baudelaire was of the same mind, and had a horror of the woman writer who, although possessing an original and lively wit, could not hope to understand the intricacies of the art of style, and the mysterious rites of the literary religion.

It is only fair to say, however, that the hideous Bluestocking of imperial times, who roused the anger of the author of *Prophètes du Passé* and *Vieilles Actrices*, has now almost disappeared. The Bluestockings of thirty years ago were Clémence Royer, Louise Colet, Claude Vignon, Comtesse Dash, André Léo, Mme. de Gasparin, Olympe Audouard, &c. They were true impenitent Bluestockings, the authors of novels with a purpose, social pamphlets, plagiarists without talent, who produced too much, whose minds were jaded, and whose conceit was unbearable.

The gentle Bluestockings of modern days who arrive at notoriety may be called Pink or Mauve Stockings. The colour of the others is almost faded, washed out, and they exert far less tyranny over their surroundings.

Those women who have socialistic and humanitarian sympathies utilise their feminine qualities in writing on social questions. These have no right to the opprobrious title. They have not relinquished their womanhood; on the contrary they make a noble use of it, in the service of the weak and the disinherited. They are modest, and have none of the pretensions of the woman of letters. They are the finished pattern of the feminine contemporary journalist.

Some women devote themselves to the papers on fashions, to which they contribute light and graceful articles, and sign themselves with some pretty pseudonym. Others do not take refuge behind any name but their own, and write letters or articles for the daily papers with incomparable grace, gaiety, and even impudence. These might be called Pink Stockings, or no stockings at all, who could write, as one of them wrote to the author of *Les Diaboliques*, by whom she had been severely criticised: "Come and see me; I will receive you without any stockings."

The modern woman author is emancipated. She has found in the fashionable papers of the times a field in which she can develop her psychological studies, and give play to her analytical grace, her coquetry of petticoat philosophy, with no attempt at disguising her sex. She must be a woman of the world, and she may, as she pleases, unravel dangerous problems of love, touch on cases of casuistry with an entire freedom from the rigorous prudery of former times. Her little tales, her intimate paragraphs, her very modern dialogues, her opinions on adultery or divorce, her little scenes bringing in different characters who express the revolutionary spirit seen in modern family conditions, her gossip on sport, clothes, hygiene, everything in short which flows from her graceful, lively, malicious pen, has an exquisite note of its own and is most essentially feminine. The pink finger-nail is made more apparent than the blue stocking, for she is on her own ground. She wanders to and fro amongst the frivolities of her life, she gives us a kind of intimate literature, fresh, audacious, mischievous, good-natured and seductive, which is perhaps hardly literature at all, but its roguish swagger takes from us all desire to criticise severely.

Side by side with these lively chroniclers is another type of ladies of the pen, who seem to exist to perpetuate the ancient and almost forgotten type of Bluestocking. They are the unutterable failures, the ambitious gossips, who have

vowed an implacable hatred for men, who make the most outrageous claims. Amongst them are seen screaming novelists filled with intellectual bitterness, poetesses abandoned by the muses and by man, sham scholars who carry about countless manuscripts to place, foreigners who have invaded France to create a position for themselves in literature, and who are ignorant even of the niceties of our language, Socialists whose projects of reform entertain several parliamentary sessions, *declassées* betrayed in their loves and their hopes, who have written some doleful "intermezzo"—in short, all the seekers after notoriety, all the disappointed ones who dream of placing their cries of despair in some review or book. These are found in great numbers scattered through every class of Parisian society. Amongst them is the learned aristocrat who signs herself Countess —, or Princess X., who publishes fine thoughts of a melancholy turn. There are also the patriotic Bluestockings who travel, make alliances, counteract the influence of fashionable spies, and manœuvre with great skill in diplomatic intrigues. The political sentimentalist, good-hearted and thoroughly believing in her methods, makes an appeal at every turn to the sympathies of Frenchwomen. Then there is the Emancipator of woman, who has her newspapers, her lecture-room, her subordinates, and who is always sending memoranda to the Press, which makes many an amusing paragraph out of her. The philosophical Bluestocking, who discourses endlessly of her "ego," who speaks of her entity, of her psychical force, who invokes Amiel, Schopenhauer, Caro, Herbert Spencer, Hegel, and all the rest, is also very amusing, as much so as the Wagnerian musical critic, or the æsthetic lady with short hair, who is a Pre-Raphaelite and lectures on art.

There are spinster Bluestockings, married Bluestockings, Bluestockings who are connected (or, one might say, *collé*, remembering Louise Collet), and the divorced or liberated Bluestocking. All of them present curious



particularities, according to rank, age, condition or temperament. Frederic Soulié has passed in review these different ranks of the mediocre woman author, as spinster, wife, mistress, or widow.

The author of the *Mémoires du Diable* wrote as follows, as a preface to his slight study: "I like this name of Bluestocking, which means absolutely nothing, because it condemns this feminine type in a masculine word. So long as a woman is laundress, actress, dressmaker, dancer, singer, or queen, one can say of her: she is pretty, graceful, refined; she has a good figure, she is charming, she is beautiful; but if she is a Bluestocking one is obliged to say: *it* is unclean, *it* is pretentious, *it* is unpleasant, *it* is a nuisance. And yet the Bluestocking is a woman, even more than any other, and as it adds a professional mind, it is very anxious to give proofs to those who ask for them—proofs of its femininity. Some learned people contend that this demonstration is a mark of cleverness. According to this, there are no stupid women."

It has been seen that the Bluestocking has always met with rough treatment from her rival and master, the man author. If, as Montaigne declares, woman is man's natural enemy, this enmity is accentuated and increased when the woman is placed in intellectual competition. The irritation of the man of letters with the Bluestocking is the easier to understand for this reason, that the masculine author is more able to see her superficiality than any other man, and it is rare that a literary man of any notoriety has not been brought into close contact with one of these women, who are generally very fond of intellectual flirtations with men of their profession. They find it stimulating and profitable from all points of view, and transform themselves into species of parasites, absorbing through all their pores the thoughts, the manner, and the general ideas of the man whose friendship they have enjoyed for a time. Some even publish his love-letters in the guise of a novel.

These fugitive connections are veritable hells. The constant criticism always on the watch between them, the hatred of superiority on the part of the woman, her jealousy of his success, her monstrous vanity, make her an object of horror in his house. The most attractive feminine qualities are generally wanting in her ; there is no sweetness, no youthful gaiety, no sweet compliance, no tenderness, no gracious admiration whose expression the author adores in his own home. Repose, leisure, momentary forgetfulness of his work have vanished, love is only a theme for embroidering fine phrases, for interpreting in precise attitudes. The terrible woman of brain is there, who observes, studies, criticises, discusses ; who has her fixed opinions, who argues every question ; and the unfortunate man, in the grip of this shrew, will have no more to do with her or her kind, for in his eyes she is not a woman, either in mind, in grace, or attractiveness, or by her dress or care of her person. He rejects her, while he dreams of some exquisite little creature with the gifts of the emotions, the genius of her sex. For the true woman should have some of the qualities of a cat by the fireside, and be caressing, sleepy, purring, and voluptuous.

It is greatly by reason of these passing connections that the traditional antagonism between the author and the Blue-stockings has grown into a blind hatred, and become thereby unjust. This aspect of the question has not yet been treated, and we only notice it in passing.

" Many circumstances (remarks Mme. Romieu) may throw a woman into a literary career : it may be a desire for money-making, which unfortunately exists in literary people—the question of money stifles the desire for fame. Self-interest too often is the motive which induces women to write. The faculty women have acquired of earning their living by their intelligence is certainly a sign of progress. It is a fine thing to make one's living by writing, but the desire for money should not smother art. The greater part of the women authors have learnt how to defend their interests,

a very necessary thing, for their weakness has previously been taken advantage of. It is easier for women at the opening of their career than for men, as there is a kind of curiosity about women's productions, and the chivalry of magazine editors opens doors for them. Nowadays critics have ceased to pour out their insipid praises, which used to gratify women in earlier times. They have no humiliating concessions made to them. They are really criticised, even attacked. Their books are read seriously, while formerly they were only skimmed with a smile. Sometimes the *demi-mondaine* calls herself a woman of letters, because she may have written one book. She therefore usurps the place of the true authoress in public opinion, which, as always, takes the counterfeit for the real.

"Fashionable women sometimes wish to become authors. This is rarely serious, it is generally the caprice of an idle woman. Some of them may write articles on maternal love or education; others novels of society more or less well turned, in which, mistaking cynicism for originality, they reproduce *risqué* scenes. They try to astonish their readers more than to attract them, and a little scandal is very useful."

A study of the literary woman would exhibit all the varieties of this curious and so far little known corporation. Gradually the type and name of Bluestocking will disappear with the disabilities which this hybrid and antipathetic creature endured for so long, and the woman author equipped for her work, hard-working, quiet and collected, with a concise, nervous style, will make herself known, and cease to be an abnormal creature. She will know how to find her vocation, not in competition with men, but in a sphere of her own, side by side with his. She will have her own mission, her special ambitions, her papers, her society, and her academies. It will be a curious spectacle.

The field in which women's intelligence can be exercised

is large enough for them to fill, without straying from it. They will guess less, they will know more. Their office will not be a cry of art for art's sake, but for utilitarianism, and our grandsons will not understand the term of Bluestocking which stigmatised the early women of letters. Order will be re-established completely. The cry has gone out "Room for women," and the women have taken their place in literature with an extraordinary energy, and a delicious exhibition of their sensibility and their power of subtle analysis.

They must not be vain, however, and must remember the remarkable law formulated by a skilful psychologist: "The development of the psychic life is in inverse ratio to the development of the sexual life."

## CHAPTER XII

### WOMEN OF THE THEATRE

*The modern actress : Her first appearance : Conservatoire pupils : The café-concert : The Divette : Dancers : Circus riders : Professional dancers at public balls*

AMONGST the feminine professions which we have skimmed over in this rapid review there are few that seem really desirable or attractive to the ambition of girls in search of a social position. But when one pronounces the word *actress*, there is a general movement, a smile, the eyes light up, a fever of desire electrifies the listener, and there is hardly a candidate for a life of independence who does not say to herself :

“An actress ! Oh, to be an actress ! To be adored, fêted, applauded, to receive admiration, make triumphs, to leave a dull and monotonous existence and shine like a star behind the footlights, at the height of celebrity. Ah yes ! that is the ideal of happiness !”

None of these young enthusiasts says to herself : “An actress ! certainly not—to be an actress is to be the slave of opinion, the servant of the public, to belong to no one, to give oneself to every one, to tremble at criticism, to have no private life, to be profaned by the desires of the audience, to force oneself to please an anonymous crowd of different moods, to endure the attentions of all sorts of men, the caprices of a manager, to interpret absurdities, to repeat parts like a parrot, to dress, to undress, to dress again, to make up one’s face and smile, to renounce all one’s personality, one’s character, one’s fancy, and every evening to repeat the eternal, insipid and monotonous

show before a theatre full of new-comers—of unknown people. Ah! never, never! all other professions are possible—but not this one——”

The actress has an incomparable fascination for the public, who will never regard her as an ordinary individual, or see her without her aureole. Whatever one may say or do, the theatrical profession appears to women a glorious life, and the height of their ambition. Even in society, where the actress has certain disabilities (which, however, are daily growing less), her ovations and successes are envied. She is the object of conversation, the accounts of her dresses are sought after, the paragraphs in the papers regarding her private life are eagerly read, the preservation of her complexion and her beauty raises curiosity, her tradespeople are noted, her love-affairs discussed, and she is credited with a delicious wit, incomparable manners, a life of unheard-of luxury, and yet——

The actress in Paris is a much more fascinating subject for gossip than the last fashionable book. People say, “Have you seen So-and-So?” She is discussed, dissected, between men and women, and is a subject for psychological and physiological investigation. By certain answers she receives from a man, a woman of the world can judge of his tastes, she knows what sort of woman he admires, what is his æsthetic and moral standard. One can never guess the number of passions slowly developed, which have had for their indirect origin a conversation on some conspicuous actress or singer.

Is this life, however, as gay and as much to be envied as is generally supposed? Before she can arrive at her hours of triumph (often so empty), the poor girl has had much misery to endure from humiliating concessions, many heart-burnings from the favours she has to bestow to gain public opinion. “What intrigues, what trials, have gone to the success of her first appearance,” says Michelet in his chapter on *La femme lettrée*, “what means has she taken to conciliate

those who recommended her ! Then comes the manager to whom she is introduced ; later, the successful author who will give her a part ; later still, the critics. I am not speaking of the large well-known papers, which have some self-respect, but the more insignificant ones. A young clerk, who spends his time in idling in some Government office, scribbles a few satirical lines, a small paper accepts them, and they are read between the acts. The actress, encouraged by the first applause, goes on to the stage full of hope—but the audience is not the same, the spell is broken, the public cold as ice—they look at one another smiling.”

An actress's first appearance ! What a pathetic chapter might be written revealing all the underground passages and back stairs to be traversed before she arrives at decisive contact with the spectators, who accept or reject her according to the chances of a part, or the inexplicable conditions of a first night. Ah ! those first-night successes !

This brilliant creature who, according to the general opinion, conquers Paris, is not much to be envied. She must be hardened against mortification, impervious to contamination, and must appear on the stage, fresh, smiling, frank, and ingenuous. But has she done with disappointments when the first obstacles are overcome ? Not at all. As she has no private means and must appear beautifully dressed on the stage, although on a small salary, she has, like the workgirl, the clerk, and so many others, to remember that she is a woman, and must supply the defects of her purse by making use of her sex. Everything round her cries, “Take a lover ! Take a lover !” She often has one of her own, but he is not the man who can save her, the man with the purse, the man with influence, the impresario. Whatever serious desires she has for work, for leading a good life, she must give in. She seeks, finds, and submits.

Many actresses, however, now affect respectability, marry

and live like good bourgeois, and are excellent mothers. Morals gain by this transformation, but art is often the loser. The public is accustomed to the irregular life of an actress; popular imagination likes to credit these pretty women with a thousand adventures, and each spectator gives himself the pleasure of imagining a possible intrigue with one of these queens of the footlights.

The entrance to a theatrical career means a great deal of hard work. After much tedious preparatory study, the actress must absorb the part she has to play. She must learn the words by heart, repeat them slowly to herself, with gestures, practising different inflections of voice, learning entrances and exits, carefully graduating gaiety and pathos. Then come the rehearsals, with her work interrupted by cuts and fault-findings. You must have a great enthusiasm for the theatre to endure this existence, confined every afternoon to a dark and badly ventilated stage, rehearsing all day, playing all night, continually on the stretch, always in excitement, never able to enjoy the pleasures of home life.

Candidates for the stage go through different apprenticeships, either by running the risks of a chance engagement, or by passing the Conservatoire examinations after many preparatory attempts. These are not accomplished without obstacles or favours. The critics, managers, and dramatic authors know all about that.

The Conservatoire pupil differs according to the classes she attends. As a writer has remarked, to enumerate this army of petticoats which flows every morning through the different sections of the Conservatoire, to mention their varieties, to mark their individualities, to sketch their physiognomies, an iron tongue and lungs of steel would be necessary. Pianists, singers, tragiennes, comediennes, and instrumentalists trip every day to this fortunate Rue du Faubourg Poissonnière, at the corner of the Rue Bergère—into this kind of barrack, where, under the direction of their



masters, the future contingents of every branch of the theatrical profession go through their manœuvres.

They soon learn all the tricks of their profession, these poor little girls, for they grow accustomed to all the demands and acceptances of their business from the very beginning. They learn the visits to the examiner, the demands for the favour of journalists, the back-stairs recommendation to professors, the discreet attentions reserved for second-year pupils. From the outset they are acquainted with all the difficulties of their business, all its shams, all its distresses, and these young flowers have been often coveted and handled by a goodly number of young and old protectors who have a taste for bringing out young pupils.

They soon come to know everything. They suspect, guess, grow jealous, they have keen eyes on the subject of dress, of lovers, and they gossip about all the tittle-tattle of this little ante-room to Theatreland.

The male members of the classes mix with them, and love-affairs often result which may perhaps last for some time, but most of the girls have by instinct a vague repugnance to such connections with comrades. They reserve themselves for older men, who have experience, authority, and influence. Moreover their mothers are there to protect the poor little creatures against the futile love passages with mere boys. They keep watch over the capital which should one day yield good interest.

We cannot hope to do justice to the whole list, to go into details on every side of the profession : the tragedienne, the comedienne, the singer, the soubrette, the dancer. The particulars, however condensed, would fill countless pages of observations on character, of all the various types in the theatrical world. A few simple sketches, a snap-shot of the whole, is all that we can accomplish, and we must turn over the leaves and go without further delay to the café-concert, where we will stay for a little while to study the types of

dancers, circus riders, acrobats, and professional dancers at the public halls. The art of compression is more difficult than may be supposed; the observer, equally with the traveller, loves to pause by the way and enjoy a chat, but we could not attempt to bring any new light to bear on the comediennes of the present day, when some excellent books of twenty years ago, like Edgard Monteil's *Cornebois*, or Henry Baüer's *Comédienne*, have only succeeded in illuminating a few odd corners of the theatrical world, without achieving a full description of the actress in her many-sided life. Descriptions of the actress are also to be found in all the novels and stories of our modern writers from de Goncourt and Daudet to Maupassant.

The café-concert or *beuglant* is one of the most demoralising elements in our contemporary life, and the performances to be seen in the green spaces of the Champs-Élysées in summer, or in the great and small music-halls of the eastern boulevards in winter, grow daily more indecent and obscene. However broad and open a mind one brings to bear upon the platitudes, the stupidities, the indecent vulgarities which form the repertoires of these popular Edens, one can only feel disgust at seeing them tolerated and applauded, and nothing is more nauseating than to witness pretty women and young girls, whom one would fain believe refined and delicate-minded, listen with undisguised pleasure to songs so profoundly debauched, so grossly stupid and unclean. It seems inconceivable that there is no censor to forbid such exhibitions.

If the standard of morals could be measured by the degree of the spectators' tolerance of indecency, the Parisian standard would be the very lowest possible. The songs in vogue now are not only unrestrained and dirty, not only full of *sous-entendus*, but they splash sordidly in the mud, they rake it up in its blackest, and plaster it over the refrains. Heavy vulgarities, filthy jokes, low and stupid pleasantries reign supreme at the cafés-concerts. Their only subjects are

the byways of vice; women of the streets and their protectors, depicted in the slang of the lowest life of the town, which the terrible talent of Aristide Bruant let loose from Montmartre on the capital.

The music is often superior to these vile effusions. If there is not much melody, there is at least a sort of wild virtuosity, an extraordinary attraction of rhythm, a disorderly kind of vivacity which is not without its charm. It may affect the parody of a waltz, or a mock-march, or an exaggeratedly pathetic air, or it may pass with frenzy from a minor harmony to a brisk allegro. In whatever form, its expression is generally agreeable to the ear—but what nameless things it accompanies!

The café-concert singers are countless. Reciters are rare. Of twenty women who succeed each other in an evening, sixteen are terrible creatures without any talent, with worn-out voices, who do not know how to sing, or how to carry themselves behind the footlights, who have not even the least idea of gesture. They amuse, or rather bore, the audience until the time comes for the more interesting turns.

Amongst these, who may be called the *mezzo-genreuses*, one finds the stout vulgar woman with a loud masculine voice, who shouts the *chanson de gueule* with an ear-splitting refrain and vehement gestures—culminating in the lowest form of dance. Then comes a reciter of semi-erotic, semi-sentimental verses, the worst of their kind. This lady is very tightly laced, and has a very affected and would-be engaging manner. She is specially favoured by the shopgirls. She bleats rather than speaks her sugar-sweet verses, and finishes with the lisp of a wheedling child, giving endless delight to the fat bourgeois present.

Another star is the *pschuteuse*, an extravagant creature in tights, draped with transparent veilings, unless she sports an extraordinary velvet coat with a train, which she kicks violently at intervals to free her feet. She also wears on her head a monstrous turban of embroidered tulle nearly a

yard across. Her songs are unspeakable and stupid enough to make her spectators yell with pleasure. They are *cocodetteries* (there is no other word), verses on the cash possessed by her adorers—refrains on her own grace and beauty. The *pschuteuse* is scarcely ever good-looking. She cultivates the slow and rather imbecile style. She is quite intolerable, and her success can only be explained by the admiration of the little *snobs* in the stalls.

Then there is the low comedy singer, in the style of Demay. She is the darling of the public. Sometimes she is clever; her astonishing grimaces, her vigorous gestures, her peals of laughter, her frank *canaillerie*, have a certain attraction of their own, but she overdoes it and her style is so near the dregs of humanity that she finishes by being trivial.

We will pass over the patriotic singers who shout ingenuous verses in which *France* rhymes with *espérance*, *gloire* with *victoire*, *armée* with *renommée*, and come to the modern reciter, the star who attracts most of the crowd, and who does not appear till about ten o'clock. She is usually clever, she has worked at her turn and has character. It is quite a special kind of talent, a mixture of impudence and sentiment, freedom and modesty, folly and sense, unconscious libertinism and hardened cynicism. She interests, attracts and excites all Paris, and when her name appears on the card announcing the artist's appearance on the stage, a sigh of relief and satisfaction is heard through all the theatre, after the stupidities which have gone before.

She sings, and receives deafening applause. Her usual repertory is three, four, or five songs. She enunciates slowly, her eyes half-closed, her arms loosely hanging down. She emphasises the misery of the vices she describes, she has a feeling for shades of meaning, for the eloquence of short pauses, for sobriety of gesture, and has a marvellous power of sending a shiver through her audience from the

stalls to the gallery. In her cold restrained style, she can make *macabre* verses effective, giving them out slowly in a cold, funereal voice.

Every evening the star sings six or seven different songs, written specially for her by specialists whose names have no special celebrity (*Les Potaches, les P'tits Vernis, la Pierreuse, Sa famille, le P'tit Cochon*), or she sings slow, languorous waltzes, sentimental and intoxicating, and the public applaud, recall her, rapping on their drinking glasses, crying "Encore ! Encore !" or "Another ! Another !" and the star comes again and again until she can sing no more, and indicating her tired throat, she asks for mercy from her insatiable tormentors.

Café-concert singers are paid very various salaries. The sorry wenches who accustom the early comers to the tone of the place, receive about 100 to 125 francs per month, but as they come to exhibit themselves and attract admirers, they are told that they can earn a great deal in front, that is, they may hope for exterior profits. The *demi-étoile* receives fifty francs a night, and even more. The *divette* can make her own terms ; she is engaged for a season of about sixty days, at 300, 400, 500, or 600 francs per night. She may also appear at fêtes or private receptions, and take part in special representations or benefits.

Dancers, either at the Opéra, the Châtelet, the Gaité Lyrique, or the Folies-Bergères and Olympia, are a corporation by themselves, and deserve to be treated separately. A study of these little ballet-dancers would be interesting, for the modern dancer has no longer the same kind of attraction or expression she had in times past, and which formed the subject of so many pamphlets published about the year 1840 and a little later.

Moreover, as a journalist has recently remarked, during the last few years at the Opéra and elsewhere, theatrical life has become more moral, more middle-class. Actresses and dancers are now very respectable.

We will quote as proof one characteristic fact, the disappearance of the "rat."

"By Jove! a clean sweep in a new building," remarks some facetious person.

At the Opéra in the Rue Le Peletier, this name was given to the wild, undisciplined little pupil of the dancing school, who indulged in all kinds of clandestine love-affairs in elegant society. Nowadays the directors know from head to foot (especially as to foot) this child who receives gratuitous education. Nothing is expected of her in return but sufficient fame and success to shed a little extra lustre over the *alma mater* that taught her all she knows. Between seven and nine years, after a severe medical examination, the pupil is admitted to the class, where the lessons can only take place, legally, out of the hours of scholastic study. This miniature *corps de ballet* soon learns to love its art, and discipline and punctuality are (who would believe it?) perfect. All is done perfectly, but the picturesque element has completely disappeared.

The modern dancer is graceful and attractive, dedicated from her earliest years to physical training; she has a very ordinary intelligence, and rarely possesses any intellectual qualities. Her art is applied to the body only, not to the mind, and as the development of her muscles has engrossed all the waking hours of her youth, she has never had the time for instruction, or for feeding her little bird's brain.

Her principal studies consist in learning how to accomplish *Assemblés, jetés, ronds de jambes, glissades, changements de pied, taquetés, ballons, pirouettes, pointes, petits battements, développés, grands fouettés, élévations* and other exercises arranged to suit the efficiency of the pupil. All the pupils go through their exercises together, and execute them before their professor, who sits magisterially between two chairs, one bearing his handkerchief and gloves, and the other his snuff-box. In the intervals they hang on bars

and go through various exercises. They remain for several minutes with one foot as high as the shoulder—a frightfully painful position.

The dancer generally belongs to the poorest class, is placed in her profession by her parents, who know quite well its difficulties and dangers. As sooner or later their “baby” is almost bound to take the downward path, they prefer the known and tolerated disorders of the theatre to those of the workshop. In the former she will make use of her sex amongst distinguished people, while in the latter she would be sunk in poverty and the lowest forms of vice.

Dancers receive less attention than any other women of the theatre. They are nevertheless better girls, precisely because they are drawn from the working classes. The greater number of them are good-hearted, affectionate and devoted, ready to form attachments to which they are very faithful. Love may be said to reign in the *corps de ballet* in Paris; there is scarcely a year when some little dancer does not commit suicide owing to an unfortunate affair of the heart.

We are not considering the stars. The *première danseuse* has a peacock’s brain and a guinea-fowl’s heart. Her whole psychology is in her shoes. There are, of course, some exceptions whom one has known, but only few.

We pass on to the circus riders, the queens of their epoch, received, fêted, adored, and married. From Lola Montes and Addah Menken, the women of the circuses have always been the subjects of scandalous gossip. The heroines of the circus who have supplied romance to real life would make a long story. “For the last twenty years,” wrote M. Louis de Neuville in an excellent *causerie*, “the circus rider has taken the place of the actress and singer in the hearts of the public. Why? This question is difficult to answer. Perhaps the kindness of the Empress of Austria for Elisa Loisset and her taste for riding have, as it were, ennobled this profession.

"At any rate, the circus rider as an artist and woman has a place apart. Although she appears in a circus, dressed in her well-fitting habit, her silk hat correctly worn, the circus-rider seems to her admirers the accomplished type of woman. She enters modestly and quietly ; above all she is absolutely correct. She seems to take no notice of the cheers of the crowd, but to be entirely occupied with the horse which she guides by hand, whip, and foot. She only notices the audience by a slight and dignified movement of the head, and the crowd sees this slim beautifully made figure, and the little hand which guides, puts to a gallop, stops, orders the horse to change his feet, walk in time with a measured tread, and marvels at the being who can command a creature ten times stronger than herself, by a mere nothing, a touch of the knee, a scarcely perceptible movement. The woman, weak yet compelling—such is the secret of her success. She represents the triumph of skill and the power of will over force—qualities eminently feminine.

"The crowd, understanding nothing of her art, only admires the grace which skilfully hides the labour, but the initiated appreciate the worth of her talent, the delicacy of her hand, and the assurance of her movements. Her beauty comes to the aid of her art, and her smile achieves the conquest. But she is one of those whom one must marry."

The woman acrobat, even the most seductive, such as the divine Oceana, who for so long balanced on her rope before thousands of admiring spectators, has not the fascination of the rider, nor her elegance, and scarcely ever receives a proposal of marriage, even from men one may call second-rate. This is because the acrobats are what they look like : common creatures, with rudimentary minds. We will therefore pass quickly over the mention of the trapeze flyers, the ladies who are fired from cannons, the exhibitors of learned dogs, the athletes, the jugglers, and the other wonderful women whose lives and manners we could not describe in



a few pages; but we must say a word on the travelling acrobats whom we see performing in the streets.

These are never alone. They are always accompanied by some Hercules, and while the husband balances weights and dislocates his joints, they turn the handle of the organ and make the round of the spectators, shaking a tambourine and encouraging the applause. "Come, gentlemen, a little 'bravo' all together for the artist."

These women are strong creatures with brawny arms, dressed in old tights mended with white cotton, and with a short skirt scattered over with tarnished spangles. Sometimes they also balance weights, and in this case they ask for your chivalry in giving your money. They are not young, their features are coarse, their complexion brick-coloured, their voices husky and rough with drink. It would not be pleasant to get a clout over the head from one of them. Theirs is a weary business and very uncertain. If the receipts on a good day amount to five francs, more often only a few sous fall into the tambourine. On fête days they are to be seen on the outer boulevards, at the Place d'Italie, the Place Cambronne, and often on the Carrefour de l'Observatoire, near Ney's statue. It is rare that a small crowd of loafers is not gathered round a couple of acrobats. Sometimes between two exhibitions these poor women may be seen suckling their babies.

There is one woman still to be mentioned, who belongs to a theatre that is scarcely ever studied, and yet is very typical of our times, *the professional of the public ball*. Many people would be greatly surprised on hearing that the business of dancing at the Moulin Rouge, Jardin de Paris, or Bullier's is a paid profession with a fixed staff and regulations, but so it is. A dancer receives 200 francs per month. She must arrive at a fixed time, and dance a certain number of dances till the end of the ball, being all the time under the control of a ferocious inspector, who fines her if she does not raise her legs high enough to please him.

So much is it turned into a business that if the inspector moves away, they show great indifference to the proceedings. They don't care about a lot of extra bother, they say. As soon as they have completed the fixed number of dances, they disappear, unless a man with his pockets full, who is struck by admiration of their dancing, takes them off to supper. If *Mimi Patte en l'air*, *La Sauterelle*, or *Môme Fromage* wants a bit of fun, it will only be with some one worth having, with plenty of money, or possibly with an artist who promises a portrait ; but they much prefer one of the moneyed class. Besides their fixed salaries, the stars of the *chahut* have another source of income. During the morning at their homes there is a crowd of women who wish to learn *le grand écart*. They give their private lessons quite conscientiously, for they are proud of their art. It is indeed a real art, although devoid of all grace, charm, or harmony ; a low form of art without the more attractive part of sensuality, but which nevertheless implies great patience, a series of dislocations and complicated movements. The point is to show the greatest agility with the least effort. It is a work of months, and many never succeed in becoming the ideal *chahuteuse*. Stars here, as elsewhere, are relatively rare. Private lessons cost 2 francs or 2.50, or 25 francs per month.

These jointed dolls make a regular academy of their eccentric dancing, and their strange pseudonyms are celebrated. *Demi Siphon*, *Rayon d'Or*, *Émeraude*, *Brise du Soir*, *Sirène*, *La Fauvette*, *Eglantine*, *La Gazelle*, *Gigolette*, *Saphir*, *Pigeonette*, *Reine des Prés*, *La Bretonne*, *Miss Rigolette*, *Mimosa*, *Mouche d'Or*, *Zizi*, and many others, after making their appearance in a Paris establishment, take engagements abroad, and exhibit, without the least shame, to Russians, Roumanians, Turks, and even Americans, the perfections of this national dance, whose only characteristic is to be ignoble. How superior is the light, deliciously discreet English cancan to these vulgar contortions and the disgusting *grands écarts* !

Many other professional dancers deserve attention. Oriental dancers, who abound since the Exhibition; serpentine dancers who, since Loïe Fuller's success, have overrun everything, and whom we see on every stage and circus, on foot and on horseback, in a whirl of different colours. But the field is too wide, and we can only attempt a general classification rather than a study of individual groups. Besides, there is no feminine profession that does not deserve its monograph. Whoever is under consideration for the moment, a book seems to be insisted on. Documents appear, and interest overwhelms the imprudent man who has allowed himself to be drawn into the vortex of a research into "professional" life.

Everything that bears on the struggle of women for life is at the same time engrossingly interesting and disquieting; for the more one searches, the more one discovers what lies underneath, and it is precisely this which is at once so attractive and depressing.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SPORTING AND STRONG-MINDED WOMEN

*Sport in Paris : Hygiene for women : Riding : Cyclists :  
Skaters : Yachting : Coaching : Hunting : Alpine  
climbing : Scientific women*

THE number of mannish women among Parisiennes increases every day, those, namely, who harden themselves by physical training, and cry after the fashion of Ninon : "Look ! I have become a man."

These modern women, who give themselves up passionately to various sports and excel in them, fall naturally into groups. Some little time ago their numbers were confined to women of society who were then called *Lionnes*, and who affected the pose as a means of attracting the admiration of a few men. By degrees, out-of-door sports found favour in society, and were imposed on it by the laws of "good form." Nowadays, there is no woman in fashionable society, if she wishes to be absolutely correct or noticed, who does not drive horses or motors (in the near future, probably aeroplanes), ride, cycle well, skate, hunt with the enthusiasm of Diana, fence, or walk like the most austere pedestrian. English customs, in which physical exercises have so much prominence, are gradually pervading the life of our higher classes. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century it was the fashion to swear by Albion, towards 1840 it increased. The D'Orsays and the Brummells became a cult. At the present time Anglomania has by no means declined. It hardly attacks the bourgeoisie, but it reigns despotically amongst the idle plutocracy,

and if what our neighbours call the "Sporting Intelligence" is mentioned, every one hastens to quote the last fashions in Rotten Row, the latest details from Epsom, or the most famous records from the Isle of Wight. For correct style, attitude, sporting clothes, the English are incontestably our masters. We are not a nation of sportsmen yet, and we have everything to learn from these men, who in almost every class, have been trained from infancy to consider the development of their muscles and regulation of their health by regular exercise, not only as a necessity, but as an art and science in practical life.

The majority of Frenchmen care very little for sport. There are fewer men in France, not in the army, who ride than in any other country; we do not mean of *gentlemen riders*, but men who ride for enjoyment. Since the time of the first Empire, the taste for horsemanship has gradually lessened in France, and while amongst all the other nations of Europe this custom has survived through the long tradition of the ages, it almost disappeared in France towards the middle of the nineteenth century, simultaneously with the introduction of railways. Horsemanship is with us now only a taste for the rich and luxurious, and it is no exaggeration to say that more than a third of our countrymen die without experiencing the joy of feeling a horse under them.

The bicycle, for many years now the most democratic means of locomotion, and the automobile, taking the place of horsemanship in all its forms, have both discredited riding still further with the mass of the public. There remain to us the permanent forms of sport, such as gymnastic exercises, fencing and boxing, which are hardly favourites with ladies. Swimming and aquatic sports, hunting and skating and riding are still the exercises most cultivated by women of mark.

Hygiene plays an important part in contemporary life, and has helped greatly to develop the taste for sport, as a corrective to the harmful results of an idle life.

As Dr. Legrange remarks in his *Physiologie des exercices du corps*, the exercise of the muscles is as necessary to women as to men, and produces two effects—the first on the muscles, the bones, and the joints themselves, the second on the region nearest the movement, and on the organs not taking any direct part in the exercise. Riding is excellent for women, and it is a very favourite form of exercise, for not only does the rider love to exert her will and her power over the restive animal, not only does she enjoy the excitement of a gallop, but her worldly vanity is also stimulated by the pleasure of meeting her friends in the Bois, in the Allée des Poteaux (called Allée des *Potins*), where she goes to see, to be seen, and to gossip.

But the fair rider in the habit by Wolmershauser or Redfern is seen at her best in the hunting field. She appears dressed ready from head to foot, in the courtyard of a country château, surrounded by huntsmen, dogs in leash, tandems ready to follow. At a signal she springs into the saddle, accompanied by some man friend who is to pilot her across country. A little trot to begin with, while the dogs, excited to get on the scent, are called repeatedly by the huntsman's horn; now the fair rider starts, joyous to feel the air on her face, her mind as free as her body, while over yonder in the furze bushes the hounds are giving tongue joyously, on the scent of the cunning fox, and the little horn sounds gaily in the morning air. "Tally-ho! Tally-ho!" How her heart beats with excitement and curiosity. She follows her guide, and they fly ahead, over hedges and ditches, their eyes fixed on the fox over there on the horizon and the hounds after him like the wind. Nothing stops her, and when the day's hunt is over, after five or six hours, the delicate little Parisienne, smiling, with pink cheeks, pats her horse, and jumps prettily to the ground, without showing the least fatigue. She feels joyous, full of life after the splendid exercise, and joins her friends at lunch, much more rested than if she had remained all

morning in her boudoir. In this English amusement the sport itself holds a secondary place ; the enjoyment of the ride is the main object.

Skating on a bright winter's morning is nearly as favourite a sport with our fellow-countrywomen. They love coming to the lake, prettily dressed in fur-trimmed costumes, short skirts, holding the little muff, their faces deliciously veiled, and gliding over the ice in rhythmic movements. Skating reveals and develops all the natural gracefulness of a woman, her marvellous power of equilibrium. She flies like a swallow, swaying to left or right. One expects collisions with other skaters, or falls, but she disappoints all expectations and defies all obstacles. Just as she is coming face to face with another skater she avoids him by a sudden movement to one side.

Skating has more adherents than riding and is becoming more popular with the bourgeoisie. Skaters are of all ranks in society, and women have a natural aptitude for it. Two or three lessons are sufficient, and after a few days of exercise the pretty pupils know more than their teachers. The pieces of artificial ice laid down in different places in Paris give great facility for this eminently feminine sport.

In the number of hygienic amusements in fashion amongst modern women, we must not forget coaching, which is much in fashion with Parisiennes, in spite of the automobile.

A journalist who modestly signs himself "Crayon-d'or" in the *Figaro* has drawn a pretty little picture of one of these parties at "Carnot-Ville," otherwise Fontainebleau. He says :

"It is like a true water-colour by Debu-court taking us back a century when the budding Anglomania changed the Comte d'Artois into an English lord, and the young duchesses to Clarissa Harlowes.

"The coach has stopped before the Hôtel de l'Aigle Noir, itself a souvenir of Louis XVI., for it was specially built in

honour of Marie Antoinette's brother, afterwards the Emperor Joseph II. In the hotel garden are gathered the passengers, surrounded by an interested crowd.

"The garden, with its fountain, has a faintly rococo air in keeping with the situation. The women in their large hats, with their small figures and straight flat skirts, recall the portraits of Reynolds. The coach is quite in the old English style, its body sky-blue, picked out with yellow. A groom in red livery sounds the horn. The little ladder is fixed. The young bloods throw a satisfied look towards any lady who may allow them to catch sight of a silk stocking. Vain hope! Nothing can be seen. The long skirts successfully conceal everything. Moreover a servant respectfully holds the garment in place. It is a delicious day, pearly-grey like English skies and English novels, and the coach carries an assortment of delightful women from the English-American Colony in Paris.

"M. de M——, the gentleman coachman and proprietor, fulfils his functions like a man fully alive to their importance. His dress leaves nothing to be desired, white coat, waistcoat with gilt buttons, plaid tie, white beaver hat.

"He speaks English like a member of the House of Lords, and to please him, every one is as English as possible.

"The moment for starting comes, the four horses begin to grow impatient. M. de M—— bids good-bye again to his friends, gathers up the reins, the horses start, and in a ray of sunlight that streams across the grass the coach, with its load of pretty women, traverses the main street, dazzling the passers-by.

"At four o'clock they find themselves in a forest road; a picnic on the grass is arranged for the children, and the grown-up people are ready to join. The autumn is the time for these simple pleasures, for long excursions and hours of leisure. Before returning to the noise and bustle of the city one may amuse oneself in a childish way, leaving all cares for the moment; as Mme. de Pompadour, the



philosophical marquise, said : 'When the sky is soft and the earth offers us simple pleasures, think only of the present hour, of the day that smiles. *Carpe diem.*'"

Yachting is a healthy reaction after the atmosphere of drawing-rooms, and some Parisiennes, although unfortunately not many, are fond of nautical pleasures. However, whether they take to canoes, fishing-boats, outriggers, or little sailing-boats, they are content to steer only, or take an entirely passive part, requiring little special knowledge.

With an allowance of good-humour, a taste for out-of-door life, and, above all, with a good deal of coquetry, and a slight air of swagger in wearing fantastic dresses, in white ducks with gold buttons, yachting caps or sailor's *bérets*, a woman can call herself a yachtswoman, on fresh or salt water, in the little harbours of the Channel or the Riviera stations in winter.

These yachtswomen are rarely Parisian by birth, they are mostly so by naturalisation or merely for the time. Many are cosmopolitan Anglo-Americans, Slavs, or Levantines, and often of quite irregular origin. These last are appreciated by yachtsmen, as they are less restrained in style and speech, and more adapted to the masculine society on board. They are often excellent helmswomen, who have been through long apprenticeships on the Seine or Marne, and who fear neither wind nor waves.

If, however, one observes the vast number of women who cycle, one must admit that riding, in comparison, has as few lovers as yachting. Every day the bicycle enrolls legions of women of all classes, either because they will not trust their husbands or lovers alone on the high roads, or that they wish to accompany some particular friend, or that the sensation of cycling is particularly pleasant to them.

The costumes in fashion for some years for this form of amusement were odd and unfeminine. Women certainly owed no sort of charm to them ; any dissimulation of her figure as she sits on the little saddle is in any case almost

impossible. There are of course exceptions to the rule, and some feminine cyclists manage to look extraordinarily graceful and attractive in the short skirt and jersey, but with the majority it is not so. The bicycle plays an important part (too much so) in vaudevilles, as anything unexpected may happen in its company, and it serves as a pretext for countless odd and amusing incidents.

Ladies who shoot are quite numerous in good society, and several names of most excellent shots could be quoted. If a woman's sight is good she can take her place among the men, and, leaving aside any feeling of chivalry which may give her extra facilities, one may safely say of the best of her sex, that their sight is perfect and their hands absolutely sure.

To the majority, however, shooting-parties are only a pretext for wearing some delightful tailor-made dress in the English style, strong boots, velvet jacket, man's shirt, soft cap with an aigrette, cartridge-case and gun. This is a real equipment for one of Georges Ohnet's heroines, a subject to inspire the fatal passion of romance.

A similar reason induces some women to become climbers and brave the perils of the Alps and Pyrenees. The perils are only apparent, and their adventures cannot be taken seriously, but the climber's costume is so easy, audacious, and piquant. The short skirt, delightfully comfortable shirt or jersey, the light veil, torn by the high winds and floating like a banner, the travelling cap and the alpenstock, give a young and slender woman an expression sufficient to attract crowds of admirers on all the Himalayas in the world.

It must be conceded that in most of these modern sports there is a vast amount of "pose," and many masculine women who affect men's dress and unséx themselves by excessive independence of mind and unfeminine manners become most antipathetic by their lack of sincerity. But in considering masculine women where is one to end? We begin with Mme. Dieulafoy and finish with the *sage-femme*.

The road would be long, the return difficult, and pauses by the way innumerable. To conclude : all forms of sport for the modern Parisienne are plausible pretexts for costume or comedy rather than a real physical occupation. Doff the riding-habit and the horse goes ; suppress the special costume of the automobilist, the bicyclist, the shot, the fencer, and feminine sports will have had their day.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PARISIAN BOURGEOISE

*The modern lady : Her occupations : Her shopping : Her taste in dress : Her visits and amusements : Theatres, balls, and receptions*

UNDER this name are now included all women with either large or small means who are not obliged to practise any profession or trade, or perform their own domestic work ; who, as Michelet expresses it, can keep exclusively for men "leur trésor de noblesse et de rajeunissement." Sometimes she is the good housekeeper, sometimes the idle extravagant woman, who enjoys her leisure while "Monsieur" works—the charming well-dressed Parisienne whom one meets everywhere, who spends her time in paying visits, in vague wanderings here and there, in shopping, in a whirl of feverish hurry and desire to kill time.

There are bourgeois of all classes, ranks, and conditions, from all parts of Paris, and of varying means. One may meet them in beautiful motor-cars, correctly dressed in the height of decorum, or, again, they may be seen in a humble way, basket on arm, marketing for the household ; but whatever their dress, their behaviour, or social condition they all come under the generic name of *bourgeoises*.

Mme. Romieu says : "The bourgeoisie is the most intelligent of our women. She is the link between the higher classes and the lower ; she is more progressive than the aristocracy, wiser than the tradespeople. She educates

her children in new ideas. If she lacks the highest degree of intellect, she at least has some stability ; if she often fails to understand certain phases of thought, she has, on the other hand, a kind of mathematical good sense applied to practical things. The particular class of bourgeoisie which has been so much held up to ridicule is that of the small shopkeeper, and its great fault, and the reason for the ridicule, lies in its attempts to hide the fact that only the other day it sat behind the counter of a shop and that some of its family are still there. Affecting to despise the aristocracy, it imitates and exaggerates its manners. It blushes at its own origin, while calling itself democratic, and its pretensions make it vulgar and detract from its merits. The wives of these small bourgeois are themselves retired shopkeepers, and women with small means of their own. If they live in a town they find themselves in an inferior position, and those who have been accustomed to business have nothing to do to fill their days. Feminine gossip comes to their aid and the time which they used to spend in housework is given to arranging the affairs of their neighbours.

“Their houses are generally very dull places for them ; the husband goes to his club, the wife left alone goes to her particular friend. They gossip about the expenses of one, the departure of another. They ransack private lives, nothing stops the malice of their tongues, and these women, who for the most part are estimable, good mothers, have no good word to say even of a young girl's reputation. The love of idle gossip makes them forget that their own children may one day be the subjects of such calumny.”

Mme. Romieu concludes thus : “The small bourgeoisie is inferior to the working woman. The latter is gifted with more natural gaiety and a mother wit. If the bourgeoisie has not the roughness of the working woman, neither has she her frankness. She is pretentious and vulgar, she

annoys us by her aristocratic scruples, and shocks us by her indiscretions and ill-bred familiarity.

"The bourgeoisie who has always been what she is, that is to say, who has never been in trade, has generally a very narrow mind, and knows nothing outside her own household and the gossip of the neighbourhood. The subjects of her conversation are the tiresome ways of her husband, the bad behaviour of her servants, the price of food, and the conduct of her neighbours. In spite of this she is charitable, but not without ostentation.

"There are few classes in which women differ so much from each other. Amongst them is found the strictest morality. They may lack imagination and poetry, but they have good sense. If they spend part of the year in the country, they occupy themselves with good works. They spend all their time with their families, go out and receive a great deal, in a perpetual interchange of dinners with their friends. These parties are not amusing, they are stiff and restrained; the women talk together on fashions and needlework, while the men on their side discuss politics."

In quoting these theories and observations from *La Femme par rapport à la Société*, Mme. Romieu's fine work, we have allowed a bourgeoisie to give her views on her own class, from her own point of view. In the other chapters we have given our own point of view, but in this case we find it impossible to be critical without perhaps being unfair, the love of solitude and travel and other surroundings having separated us from these particular social circles. Mme. Romieu relieves us of our embarrassment, and we borrow still another passage from her book in order to finish the picture.

"We will speak," she says, "of a higher class, which may be said to form a world of its own, the great lady of the financial world, who had her origin in the time of Louis Philippe, and the great lady of

the present time, recalling the brilliant epoch of the Empire. Both of them have a slightly artificial charm which is only acquired in society. The lady of the Faubourg St. Germain belongs to the more aristocratic type. A 'great lady' in the fullest sense of the word, she can be found in no other surroundings. Ultra-refined in distinction, she maintains through her inherent prejudices a certain nobility of feeling.

"In these ranks of society, the woman's part in life is to be charming and attractive. She has no other duties than those of society. Visits to pay and receive, continual receptions absorb all her time; she has neither the time to be mistress of her house, except for receiving her guests, nor to be mother of her children. Her servants are supervised by a steward or housekeeper, and her children by nurses and governesses."

Let us add a few touches to this excellent and accurate sketch.

She is rarely seen with her husband, as it is correct for each to have his or her own carriage and servants. Isolated in the midst of her family, deprived of all responsibility, her only occupation is to be a woman of society. She is seen in her box at the opera, because it is fashionable to like music, but as it would be considered vulgar to enjoy the theatre like a common bourgeoisie, she affects to be bored there, as indeed she really is. To seem bored is the fashion, to seem interested in anything would be bad form. She is often obliged to go to several parties in one evening, and thus spends hours shut up in a carriage which only advances at a foot's pace. To be seen and to shine, this is the existence of these brilliant butterflies, who, by constantly endeavouring to idealise themselves, have ceased to be women—their hearts beat no longer under the stiff bodices, the blood does not circulate under the smooth white skins, their slender bodies do not seem made for maternity, and real passion would break them like reeds.

These coquettes, covered with silk and lace, have nothing to do with the life of common humanity. They live in a false environment, and breathe an enervating atmosphere. On the rare evenings when they are to be seen with their husbands, they are unconscious of the emptiness, the weariness of these gatherings from which any interesting discussions are excluded, and where only cold conventionalities are exchanged according to the reigning formula. Their sole interest is to notice each other's gowns, to appraise the value of each other's diamonds, and to try to remember what they have observed as a subject for consideration at the next "five o'clock," where subjects are so scarce.

Let us leave the fashionable bourgeoisie and come to the comfortable mediocrity of another class, where the highest intelligence of Parisian society is to be found. In the middle-class bourgeoisie is to be found the very essence of the Parisian type. The women are quick, intuitive, highly intelligent, sufficiently educated without pedantry, excessively alert to all that goes on, eager, passionate lovers of their Paris, where they know how to live with taste and even art, never tired or bored, as their occupations, though seemingly futile, make them ceaselessly busy. They say to each other, "My dear, I don't know how I find the time to do everything. I haven't a minute to myself." And in truth the life of the Parisian bourgeoisie is abundantly occupied. The things she does are not serious pieces of work, but she loves to exaggerate their importance, and to consider her pleasures in the light of urgent duties. In the morning she must attend to her house, her tradespeople, her children, her dress; in the afternoon she must go to the dressmaker, the coiffeur, pay a visit to some friends, shop, buy some flowers at the market, try on a coat at the tailor's, a hat at the milliner's; always on the rush, looking at her watch and then tearing off to the Louvre or Bon Marché, the daily



refuge of Parisiennes continually on the look-out for some extraordinarily cheap sale.

Ah! those shops, what a resource they are for many of our bourgeois! They form pretexts, excuses, aims in their empty and disorganised lives. They go perhaps in search of a few yards of material or a cheap fan, but nevertheless the shop forms a part of their daily occupation. If the husband asks in the evening, "What have you done to-day, dear?" the reply is six times out of ten, "To-day? I just went into the Bon Marché." Sometimes this answer may conceal a piece of folly or worse, but in general it is true enough.

One may see them any day, walking in serried bands through these great shops, turning over and appraising the silks, materials, lingerie, parasols, and all the frivolities of dress—greedy for reduced prices, eager for the excitement of the sale and the chatter accompanying it. They often spend without necessity, simply from caprice, for they must have some distraction, some excitement, and in their homes their desire for movement, for tenderness and affection is often unsatisfied.

It must be added that they are very clever and that their success in the art of dressing themselves requires something akin to the art of a painter in choosing a colour, or a writer in the mysterious harmony of a phrase.

Even when they remain shut up in their homes, they decorate the walls with attractive colours, and their rooms are filled with all kinds of charming objects. From the East they get beautiful materials or enamels. Sometimes they have a craze for everything Japanese, for screens, pottery, umbrellas, fans, or bronzes—or the delightful embroideries which they hang in their rooms with childish joy.

But dress is their great interest; dress in all its forms, as each season comes round, is a fresh preoccupation.

They try to anticipate the fashions and to be the first to wear a new design. They go to the tailors with anxiety to see the latest materials, to discuss the question of long or short skirt, the shaped coat, or the sac—linings, trimmings, belts, buttons, &c.

The bourgeoisie, however, is often a mother, and if this subject is only incidentally mentioned here, it is because our final chapter deals with her maternal qualities and her home virtues.

The child counts for much in her daily occupations. A part of every morning is devoted to the care of its health, to giving it the first lessons in reading, writing, music, to taking it out prettily dressed, proud, as a happy mother, in attracting admiration in the street for Monsieur or Mademoiselle Bébé, to taking it to the Guignol and the Jardin des Plantes or the Tuileries.

It is curious how pretty and attractive in appearance the mothers contrive to be, when one sees them on some bench in a park putting on an untidy child's hat, lacing its boots, wiping its little nose, or its mouth all sticky with sweets. They are incomparably peaceful and neat in all these little attentions and, always with a gay smile, they show in every line and attitude a fascinating side of maternity. Bourgeoise mothers are inclined to be fidgety and are not fond of going out when they cannot take their children with them. They are nervous about giving them up to the charge of servants, and they never quite enjoy anything away from them. The feeling that the children are left, perhaps not well, perhaps lying awake, fills them with an anxiety which mars all their pleasure. Those who are not troubled by maternal cares spend their evenings either dining out, in dancing, or little intimate receptions at home. Some there are who dislike society, and avoid social gatherings of all descriptions, preferring if they are happily married the calm enjoyment of evenings at home. However, we are only considering here the generality of true Parisiennes,

who are active-minded and social and free from all provincialism.

The theatre, above all things, interests and exhilarates them. It is their favourite subject of conversation. They love to enumerate what they have seen. "We went on Monday to the Variétés, on Wednesday to the Français, Thursday to the Nouveautés." Thereupon a flood of talk is let loose, full of impressions on the plays and the actors: "I adore Bartet"—"That little creature is so delightful in the second act"—or "Have you seen Réjane's dress in Donnay's play?"—"Oh, but how fat Colette is getting, she is like a ball"—"I could never endure that actor, he gets on my nerves"—and a hundred similar phrases.

Every one talks at once when the theatre is mentioned in a Parisian drawing-room—old and young, all take some part. It takes the place of literature for these ladies who scarcely read at all. How could they find the time for reading? New plays, on the other hand, are so easy and convenient for them; they have only to frequent the theatres to get a smattering of literary things, musical phrases, and a knowledge of the fashions. They see all the parts played by the principal actors, and chatter of them in a familiar way, and thus have a means of exchanging ideas, hardly to be found so easily in any other way.

The bourgeoisie once or twice in a season gives a reception, which causes almost a revolution in her life. On those days her home is in a state of siege, the doors are taken away, all the furniture displaced, the bedrooms are turned into buffets or cloak-rooms. Everything must be on a grand scale; friends must be surprised, and be forced to say, "By Jove—the So-and-sos do things well!" A grand piano is brought into the drawing-room for the concert which precedes the dance, flowers and shrubs adorn the staircase and the hall. Servants in livery shout the names

of the guests, and finally a splendid supper is served at little tables as in the best society.

On that evening the brave organiser does not seem in the least tired by the work she has done all day. She is radiant, beautifully dressed, her hair arranged to perfection. She is a charming hostess with a pleasant word for every one, and it is said that her parties are much gayer and more enjoyable than a great many aristocratic receptions of those great ladies "who give themselves so many airs."

The small dinner-parties of six or eight guests which the Parisian bourgeoisie manages so admirably are delightfully informal. In these small gatherings the Parisienne is seen at her best and most intelligent, and her innate gifts as a charming and sympathetic hostess find their full expression. The guests feel her pleasure in seeing them, and in spite, perhaps, of insufficient service, or other shortcomings, the hostess receives them so graciously, arranges for their slightest wishes with so much foresight, that she cannot be compared with any other woman in the world.

Balzac wrote truly when he said, "You will meet in many other countries in Europe good manners, cordiality, kindness, but it is only in Paris, in certain houses, where you will find the particular flavour which gives to all these qualities a special charm, a curious power to set free a profusion of thoughts, anecdotes, ideas. Paris alone possesses this science which can change a conversation into a discussion; where each nature is valued at a glance; where each individual expresses himself in a word; where every one is amused, at his ease, and at his best; where light conversation flows, turns, changes its colour and aspect at every phrase; where every eye glistens; where gestures question, and expressions respond; where, in fact, all is intelligence and brain."

This social quality described by Balzac is to be found among the bourgeoisie, that interesting class of Parisian society where we may meet all the women and men of

talent, wit, and powers of conversation which do honour to our dear Paris. It has been said that the aim of civilised life is the art of repose : it may be added that the Parisian bourgeoisie has refined and elevated its repose in discovering the supreme art of animation.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE WOMAN BEYOND THE PALE

#### LOW-CLASS PROSTITUTES

*Artificiality of contemporary prostitution : The prostitute of the fortifications : Gigolettes and souteneurs : Little flower-girls : Pseudo-workgirls : Brasseries de femmes : Les Étudiantes : The lady of the window.*

OUR next subject is the sinister and sombre queen of Paris by night—the prostitute. She is a wandering creature who appears in many forms : she murmurs her solicitations at the street corners ; she brushes by you on the boulevards ; you meet her at cafés and hotels ; she signs to you from her window ; she awaits your arrival at the railway stations ; she watches you from behind the curtain of the shop where the goods displayed are not those which she means to sell. Or, again, she lies immured in some dark house, where she offers to all comers her passive lips.

The prostitute is born of misery and vice ; she is essentially unnatural. She might be supposed to have been created by some diabolical decree to satisfy the bizarre passion for the abnormal which, in eras of excessive civilisation like our own, possesses men who have lost their bearings in life—men who crave for new emotions, for the “new thrill,” aimed at by Baudelaire, who took the prostitute for his heroine and wrote of her more finely than any one.

Paint, crude and enervating perfumes, expert perversity—these are the marks of the prostitute from the top to the bottom of the scale. Another of her characteristics is the *impersonality* which she achieves ; her hideous trade

is to her a trade and no more. She gives you value for your money; the harlot who "does" her customers is less common than might be supposed.

At the very bottom of the ladder is the woman who haunts the fortifications. She is an aged, battered, exhausted being, who hides herself by day and comes out only when it is dark. She is to be seen wandering along the ramparts, her eyes alert with fear of the police. She is usually of enormous size, clad in a patched black jersey which ill contains her flabby bust. No one could define the precise shade of her skirt, which an impressionist painter of our acquaintance justly described as "the colour of a very dusty spider's web in the corner of a yellow wall." She wears an apron, stops her wrinkles with brick-dust, "does her eyes" with the burnt end of a match, and flattens out her grizzling hair with rose or jasmine pomade at two sous the pot. Such jasmine and such roses! She dawdles about, waiting for customers, hardly daring to solicit, for she is afraid of being too closely inspected, knowing full well, poor thing, that if a man looked twice at her he would at once take flight. Some of her customers are navvies, who are themselves very poor; but she caters chiefly for soldiers in barracks on the bastions or in the outskirts of the city.

The soldiers do not even know her name; they call her "*la paillasse*," "*Marie-mange-mon-prêt*," or "the ammunition loaf." The last name arises from the fact that in order to pay for her favours they sell the ration of bread that is served out to them, and give her the five or six sous they get for it. She asks no more. She cannot afford the rent of a room in a disreputable hotel, so she takes for boudoir the embankment of the fortifications.

She leads a melancholy life, the prostitute of the fortifications: she neither laughs nor sings. She is too repulsive and earns too little to attract a *souteneur*; but for all that she is often beaten, and sometimes thrown into the ditches

by the marauders who hover about the barriers, and who rob her of the few sous she has earned by the sweat of her poor old body.

When she has done very well and made as much as two or three francs, she gets drunk on cheap brandy or absinthe, and staggers to her lair in some wooden shed open to all the winds, where she sleeps off her potations on a heap of noisome rags. If business is brisk, she subsists on scraps bought from low-class eating-houses. If not, she rakes the rubbish heaps. She is humble and uncomplainingly resigned to her fate. So long as she can walk she gives herself to whomsoever will have her, or cannot find better. At sixty or seventy she is found one morning lying dead, or half dead, on the slope of some earthwork. If she has the good fortune to be picked up by a night patrol of the police, she does not die in the open; she ends her days in the hospital or in some local police infirmary.

A much more formidable species of prostitute is the *gigolette*, who is also to be found on the outskirts of Paris. She is the mistress of the garotters of La Villette or the stabbers\* of Grenelle. She it is who beguiles the passer-by, decoys him into an ambush, and then whistles for her *souteneur*, who rushes up with his companions to "do for the cove"† She frequents the evil places known as *bals musettes*, a sort of dancing-halls, where the *habitués* empty salad-bowls of mulled wine *à la française* and where every dance costs a penny. The dancers are workmen who have fallen into evil courses, *souteneurs*, garotters, thieves of all kinds, servant girls and workgirls on the spree, the vilest prostitutes, "police narks"—in fact, all the charming society of which the *Bal des vaches* of the President T—used to offer such a remarkable example.

The *gigolette* is almost always young, and often pretty;

\* *Surineurs*.

† *Degringoler le pante*.



or else she has the fascinating ugliness which in many Parisiennes is a more deadly bait than beauty. She evades the vigilance of the police as much as possible and tries as long as she can to avoid being "put on the list." If she is arrested as the result of some robbery with violence; or taken up in the course of a police raid, she regards her term at St. Lazare as a disagreeable experience; but she is not in the least reformed when she is discharged, and the very severe regimen of this prison has no effect on her except to breed ideas of vengeance, in which she is sedulously encouraged by her amiable friend and bully.

So long as she is not registered she wanders hither and thither, following her "*p'tit homme*" from lodging to lodging; for owing to the attentions of the police, with whom he has often a crow to pick, he is frequently obliged to change his address. As soon as she gets on the list, a definite space on one side of such and such a street or a certain beat on a boulevard is assigned to her. There she "does her turn" and walks backwards and forwards, hooking her arm into those of the passers-by. If she transgresses the limits set by the police, she is liable to a fine; but when their backs are turned she does so all the same, and this leads to terrible quarrels with her colleagues who are in possession of another part of the street—quarrels which end in blows and are conducted after the fashion of the dog-fights of Constantinople. When she secures a customer she takes him to a room at some low hotel.

Meantime, her *souteneur* sits at a table at a neighbouring wine-shop or hides in the recess of a door, keeping a close watch on her movements. If she lets slip an opportunity he abuses and beats her; he insists that she shall "give her mind to her work." When he thinks she has made enough he fetches her back to their headquarters at Belleville or La Villette, or in one of the streets in the Clignancourt Quarter which are affected by this class. She surrenders all her money to her *souteneur*, and if she

attempts to divert any and is awkward about concealing it he gives her a sound thrashing. When times are good and she has got hold of some "oofy Johnny,"\* or cleaned out a drunken man, her lover allows her a night off, and then they go together to the dancing-hall. As a rule she spends most of the night drinking, so she sleeps late, rises about eleven, has her absinthe, and spends the day in the taverns with her bully and his friends, who for their part are accompanied by their women. She is usually faithful to her man. If he goes to prison for a short term she is not unfaithful to him, and does not join forces with another "*type*" unless her original master is sent to penal servitude. In such a case it is not unusual for the bully to choose one of his boon companions whom he indicates as his successor.

However constantly she may be beaten and maltreated by her *petit joyeux*, she continues to adore him, and even if he ends by stabbing her she dies heroically without peaching. If by exception she does denounce him she very rarely escapes the vengeance of other *souteneurs*. She may change her quarter as much as she likes, she always ends by being knocked on the head. With the women of her own class she has frequent disputes, especially if they try to take her man away from her. Then follow battles in which the knife plays its part. The happy man who is the subject of the quarrel watches the fray as a gratified spectator, and awards himself to the conqueror as the prize of victory. The fortunes of these women are so closely linked to those of their *souteneurs* that if by any chance; such as the passing caprice of some rich protector who sets up house for her, one of them rises a step in the ranks of prostitution; she does not leave her bully, but installs him in some corner of the flat, from which he emerges if the *miché* is not generous enough.

Prostitutes of this type pursue their melancholy occupa-

\* *Miché galetteux.*

tion so long as they are not too old or too much exhausted by debauchery, drunkenness, or disease. The older they grow the younger are their *souteneurs*. I have heard of prostitutes of forty or fifty whose *souteneurs* were only from sixteen to eighteen years of age. Of course, as they age and become faded their takings diminish, and instead of walking up and down the pavement, they hire a room at a franc a night in some house of ill-fame, where, half invisible in the shadow, they call for custom.

The abolition of the baser prostitution would be a heavy task; but, however difficult the problem, it merits a different kind of handling from that represented by our most recent police regulations. It is not by compelling street-walkers to wear hats that any serious progress will be made!

A distinguished impressionist painter once proposed to me that we should go to an establishment well known on Montmartre as the *Café des Assassins* to collect æsthetic and psychological data. It was behind the Sacré Cœur on the northern slope of the hill near the Rue Cortot. It was a little one-story house, painted red, with a garden containing arbours and a swing. The company was mixed. There were artists, poets, and singers, and also *souteneurs* with their *gigolettes*, who came there to refresh themselves after a visit to the neighbouring dancing-place. Two of the latter were drinking inside in company with two fair friends of from eighteen to twenty-two years of age. One of these was dark with a dull complexion, a much-curled fringe on her forehead, and a sensual mouth with thick lips. She wore celluloid earrings and ostentatiously displayed a bracelet of rolled gold. She was small and well made; her black jersey showed off her bust, and she wore a drab skirt with red stripes and a poppy-coloured ribbon in her hair. The other was rather tall, with green eyes, long lashes, and well-arched eyebrows. Both were painted up to the eyes and plastered with powder.

These girls were arguing with their men friends on the subject of a bad two-franc piece which had to be passed off again on the keeper of the wineshop. Their conversation, which can only be recorded with modifications; was conducted in the argot of the butchers of La Villette (to which profession the two gentlemen probably belonged), which is the most obscure and difficult slang that exists. After some preface, ending on our part with the offer of a bowl of hot wine, my friend proposed that they should sit to him. The girls were much flattered, and consented, of course after consulting their lords and masters, who maintained a certain dignity spiced with banter in their dealings with us in consideration of our character of outsiders (*pantes*).

"As you are so pretty," said I to the brunette, "you must have many admirers."

"Yes," she replied; "but that's just what I find so dull; they are so common—a coarse lot! I like people who smell nice, and shave every day, and have linen like my *petit homme*. If he would let me, I would go to the Moulin Rouge; and wouldn't I do some nice high-kicking there! But he won't let me."

"Talk of that again and I'll bash your head in!" declared the *petit homme* in question. "It's not likely I'll let you go to the Moulin Rouge and have you taking a fancy to some fool of a counter-jumper and doing me in."

"And you, mademoiselle," I said to the blonde, "do you like the men at the Moulin Rouge?"

"Oh, I don't care. Men are all dirty brutes."

Many prostitutes of the lower orders, in order to protect themselves from the activities of the police, pretend to have a trade. This is particularly the case with girls under age. Some of them are as young as fifteen; some even younger. The disgraceful evil of the small flower-girl is everywhere; you see them passing by the terraces of cafés and stopping opposite those whom with their precocious

perspicacity they judge to be susceptible to their attractions.

Others, again, instead of selling flowers, pass themselves off as workgirls. You will often meet these impostors in the Avenue de l'Opéra, in the Rue du Quatre-Septembre; or on the boulevards. They dawdle along in couples, with handboxes or baskets on their arms and their eyes alert. Contrary to the practice of real workgirls, who do not receive such attentions kindly, they accept invitations without any display of annoyance, are perfectly willing to have a drink, and do not require to be pressed to enter a providential cab.

There are grades and degrees in all this peripatetic prostitution. Better turned out and also older are the bands of women who wear hats with extravagant feathers and loudly coloured dresses, and who are to be seen at any hour of the afternoon, but principally at dusk, on the boulevards and in the adjacent streets. They promenade slowly, or else pretend to be in a hurry, jostle you as they pass, or launch a significant ogle which invites you to follow them. If you mend your pace and overtake them they take you to some squalid *hôtel garni* in the quarter which extends from the Rue des Martyrs to the Boulevard Rochechouart.

Since the beginning of last century they have had their headquarters there, especially in the Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, from which comes the obsolete term *lorette* by which they were still designated so recently as twenty years ago. The Rue de la Bruyère, the Rue Chaptal, and the Rue Bréda are also much affected by them, and there they form colonies which fill whole houses. These places, known as *boîtes à femmes*, are veritable pandemoniums crowded with women who sleep till near noon, and go about all the rest of the day in frowsy undress, smoking cigarettes and drinking absinthe. Until the hour of business—that is; till about five in the afternoon—they sit playing with each

other or with their favoured lovers interminable games of cards, at which they lose the money they have extracted from the passing visits of the previous night. The *souteneur* properly so called is rare in these surroundings. He is replaced by the *amant de cœur*, some shopwalker or clerk who is chosen for himself and his companionship.

These ladies must be in straits indeed, or their landlord must be unusually exacting on the subject of arrears for rent, food, and drink, before they can be induced to go out before night ; but every evening the man-hunt recommences. Their first care is to dine, and for this purpose they take conspicuous places at a café, sometimes accompanied by their favourite female friend. They reckon up the men present with a glance, question the waiters, with whom they are on good terms, and talk and laugh loudly. If a gentleman, excited by their manœuvres or by the number of his drinks, yields to the temptation, all is well ; the evening's amusement is provided for and also the earnings of the night. If not, there begins a long pilgrimage through the cafés. They go from one to another, making the circuit of the tables, brushing by the customers and looking well in their faces in order to sound their inclinations. If by ten o'clock they have found nothing they try to get round a waiter in order that in exchange for their favours he may pay for the two or three sandwiches and the glass of beer which will be all the dinner they will get. If even this fails they do without food and go to a place of amusement, and if no one comes to the rescue there they try the night clubs ; and she who towards three in the morning succeeds in getting the offer of a modest *choucroute garnie* sups and dines in one.

The prostitute always hopes to meet some generous person who will take a fancy to her and launch her on a great career ; but this happy chance rarely occurs. She prays for it daily, and the fortune-teller has no more

devoted client. If it does not come to pass she continues the same vicious circle of the daily hunt.

All these unfortunates, however, belong to the Right Bank. On the Left Bank, and notably in the Latin Quarter, things are different. In the first place, you will still find there a certain number of the establishments known as *brasseries de femmes*, which have quite disappeared from the Right Bank. But what a decadence there is even on the *Rive Gauche*! I can remember a time when these places swarmed on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, and the Rue de Vaugirard; indeed, wherever there were students. The *Louis XIII.*, the *Médicis*, and the *Tir Cujas* were almost famous twenty years ago. There you met young and pretty waitresses. Now your beer is poured out for you by ancient harlots; stranded there for want of something better, who drag their old bones wearily in and out among the deserted tables. Even the students are forsaking them. The *femme de brasserie* begins her work at noon. She is fed by the establishment, and receives a set of counters representing five francs. When these are exhausted she is given as many more, and so on as business may require. She has to give back to the cashier 5.50 for every five francs when the accounts are made up at night. Her wage is composed of the *pourboires* of the customers. Her task is to stimulate fiercely the demand for drink, and for that purpose to drink a great deal herself. It therefore generally happens that towards the end of the day she is completely drunk. She is free to go home at two in the morning.

The *femme de brasserie* has been superseded by the peripatetic prostitute who frequents the cafés and the beerhouses where the students still go. If the *grisette* has entirely disappeared—perhaps she never existed except in the imagination of Murger and his friends—the women of the Left Bank are to-day even, as a rule,

younger and more beautiful than their colleagues on the Right. The Quartier is usually the scene of their *début*. There you find models who pose little, if at all; workgirls who have become "gay"; ladies' maids who have lost their places. Many of them are still fresh; some, indeed, are only seventeen or eighteen. They are not so grasping and indifferent as the women of the Right Bank, who have been longer at it, and they are glad to attach themselves to a student and to live with him till he finishes his course. They are faithful enough, and deceive him only if a sudden fancy takes them, or when the "dear boy's" allowance is exhausted towards the end of the month and things are at a low ebb. They accompany their lovers to the café, take part in the interminable games of cards which with these young hopefuls prelude the exercise of the liberal professions. They are bored to death with the long conversations which take place about law and medicine; but they plume themselves greatly on their position as recognised mistresses compared with that of their friends who have to depend on the passing client for their subsistence. Some of them become genuinely attached to their lover, and when he either goes away to the provinces at the end of his academic course or takes up with another woman, they often commit suicide tragically, or at all events attempt to do so. The Café d'Harcourt on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, if we may believe the newspapers, lately became the scene of a whole series of incidents of this kind. In a single year five or six wretched girls who had been abandoned by their lovers swallowed the contents of a bottle of corrosive sublimate, and one died.

The *étudiante* is fond of dancing, like her wretched counterpart of the *Rive Droite*; she is an enthusiastic *habituée* of Bullier, where, under the paternal protection of the municipality, she engages in wild quadrilles. Such as are not successful in finding there an escort for the night go to the *laiteries*, as certain establishments situated



in the Rue Racine, Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, and at the bottom of the Boulevard Saint-Michel used to be called. They may now have disappeared, but they used to be kept by bakers and grocers, who remained open till four in the morning and sold food and milk, and also *sub rosa* a horrible kind of white wine and adulterated spirits. If our *étudiants* have no better luck there they go home, either alone or with a colleague, or perhaps pay a visit to Baratte's at the Halles, the last hope of night-walkers longing for the golden sunrise of a louis d'or.

Another kind of prostitution which is found to some extent in all quarters is what is known as "doing the window." A painted lady, with her hair down, dressed in a garish tea-gown, places herself at a first-floor window, with a lamp and a red-flowered curtain behind her, and makes signs to the passers-by. She is generally both discreet and expert, and is apparently very popular with the middle class. Hers is a recognised branch of the profession.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MIDDLE-CLASS PROSTITUTES

*Unregistered prostitutes : Their methods according to M. Lecour : Their increasing number : Modus operandi : Decadence of the official houses : Manners and customs of the inmates*

BESIDES the women who are officially catalogued at the Prefecture of Police as licensed courtesans; there are legions of the Cyprian army who are not less dangerous; and indeed are perhaps even more formidable, for they are unlicensed practitioners. These are the irregular prostitutes—*filles insoumises*, as they are called—who have been clever enough to escape being compulsorily registered.

M. J. Lecour, formerly at the head of this branch of the police administration, has been able to study them at close quarters. We quote his account, which is better than any we could give :

“Unlicensed prostitutes,” he says; “are everywhere—at the beerhouses, the cafés-concerts, the theatres, and the balls. One meets them in public places, on all the promenades, in front of most cafés. They are to be seen on the smartest boulevards till a late hour, to the great scandal of the public, who take them for registered prostitutes contravening the regulations, and blame the police unjustly for not putting a stop to it.

“Many of these women do not solicit openly like regular practitioners. They only ogle and jostle, and try to attract attention by their dress and behaviour. They are

accosted, but do not accost; they watch for their opportunity and make use of every chance.

"There are cafés where they are allowed to drink at the expense of the proprietor without paying a penny, unless indeed another guest pays for them, as usually happens. There are restaurants known to the gay world where they get their meals gratis in consideration of the benefits which they have procured, or will procure, for these establishments. There are carriages at their disposal on the same conditions. In summer they make their captures by installing themselves in front of a café and exchanging banter with the object of their attentions, either directly or through some beggar or flower-girl. It is also managed by taking a cab and driving very slowly alongside the pavement. Beside the lady is an empty place, which she offers to the passer-by. He who takes it pays for the drive and the rest. The cabman, needless to say, is a party to the manoeuvres and anxieties of his client, and gets his percentage of the returns.

"At the theatre, where they arrive late in order to be as conspicuous as possible, they attract the eye by eccentricities of dress. They go out after each act, put off and on wraps of gaudy colours, talk loudly, laugh noisily, and play conspicuously with opera-glasses and fans. Where have they dined? Who will take them home? Where will they sleep? These are questions more easily asked than answered.

"Others who frequent beerhouses or cafés-concerts go from table to table, laughing, making a disturbance, provoking attention, looking for the word which gives them an opportunity to start a conversation. For most of them, and these the youngest and the least perverted, the dancing-hall is the only hunting-ground, and there are public balls suited to all costumes and to all tastes."

In Paris there are, on the lowest estimate, about 60,000 *filles insoumises*. They constitute the main part of what

we have here called middle-class prostitution—that is to say, the medium status of the profession. It is kept going by Government employees of the lower grade, tradesmen, commercial travellers, provincial men of business passing through Paris, foreigners, capitalists, the whole class of opportunists in luxury, which, Heaven knows, is numerous enough. These egotistical persons deal with prostitutes as they do with restaurants. They go at the risk of being poisoned, impelled by some vague instinct of gallantry which pleases them as much as a genuine love affair. Bachelors do not form the majority of the unregistered harlot's passing lovers. On the contrary, it is the married men who love to indulge themselves by snatching an infidelity, the pleasure of which, though inconsiderable, is a welcome change from the monotony of connubial bliss.

Whence come these conquerors of the public streets? How are these invading legions recruited? Many of the successors of Parent Duchâtelet have tried to answer these questions, but not one of them has succeeded quite to our satisfaction in doing so. Maxime du Camp in his excellent *Notes sur Paris*, Lecour, Macé, Yves Guyot, and F. Carlier are all of them observers of this untrammelled ocean of the unregistered, but not one of these has sounded its deepest depths or probed its darkest mysteries.

Poverty, no doubt, is the chief motive. In the previous chapters of this book we have seen how terribly low are the wages of women of the working class, who are hardly able to feed themselves with the proceeds of from ten to fourteen hours' work a day. But besides poverty and laziness, vanity and calculation must be taken into account. For, strange though it may seem, it is not the workgirls who are responsible for the increase in the number of the *insoumises*. It is domestic servants, daughters of lower middle-class families, peasant girls, female teachers unemployed, former pupils of the school of the Legion of

Honour at Saint-Denis, orphans, *divorcées*, and emancipated females of all sorts who have not been able to make up their minds to a laborious and well-regulated life.

"Many of these unregistered prostitutes," a police officer informs us, "are country girls come to Paris to go into service. They make friends with people who perhaps come from their own part of France and who themselves are already corrupted. On the pretext of bettering themselves in some way the newcomers leave their situations. Then comes a course of experience at *crémérias* and dancing-halls and a series of disreputable acquaintances. The girl quits her bonnet for a hat, gives up her modest style of dress for the reigning fashion. First she lives by adventures, and then by prostitution.

"There is also the ambitious and calculating type. Such a girl leaves her village as the result of some scandal. She takes a line which makes it impossible for her to go back. She dreams of beginning life in Paris by getting a place on special terms ; she hopes to get a clever workman as a lover, who will afterwards marry her and get a business of his own. Instead of this she finds simply the casual seducer, a few triumphs for her vanity, the life of the suburban cabaret and the garret, and ultimately abandonment and ruin.

"Others live with a man in idleness for a time ; then he abandons his mistress, who, finding herself obliged to work, becomes a prostitute rather than go back to the country. Such women are turned out and sent back to their native place if possible. But they have so little moral stamina that, in spite of everything that can be done, they decline listlessly into the ranks of the venal.

"Then there is a great number of women, a special feature of Parisian life, who begin their career with an escapade or two, but for some time do not break altogether with certain conventions, however far they may be from really respecting them. At first they make

a living by doing a little work in the midst of a great deal of dissipation and pleasure ; but they gradually lose their self-respect, pin all their hopes to securing some liaison which will give them resources immediate and prospective, and while they are waiting for their fortune they simply go on the streets.

"There is, finally," says the same observer, "a class of women, young but cynical and perverted, who take up evil courses as others take up a trade. They are as anxious to make money as anybody. One of them said to me, 'I have no luck. If I only had 6000 francs' worth of *real* diamonds, it would be an investment and I should make money. One must begin somewhere.'"

Again, there are the victims of the procurer, to whom vice is second nature and who are quite unconscious of doing wrong, having been brought up from their childhood to be immoral. Among these unfortunates may be included the victims of the white-slave traffic, who, upon pretence of honourable employment in the provinces, are entrapped into some house of ill-fame, in which they remain as inmates. This brings us to the *maison close* which, alas ! is also characteristic of Paris.

The official "cloister," the convent of the nuns of the order of Aphrodite, has of late years entered on a period of decadence analogous to that which has overtaken the *brasseries* of the Latin Quarter. In both cases this is due to the competition of the unlicensed prostitute, who year by year has things more and more her own way. In vain do the inmates take turns at standing before the door and touting eagerly for custom ; few yield to the fascinations of these secluded Cyprians. And the decline is general, showing itself as much in the luxurious establishments of the richer quarters as in the wretched dens of the exterior boulevards.

The inmates of these places are singular creatures, who drift from town to town or from neighbourhood to

neighbourhood, possessed by a strange restlessness which drives them to seek constant changes of abode. Nearly all of them come from the provinces, but a certain number are Parisian. Nothing could be more rudimentary than their intelligence ; they are literally nothing but animals whose function is to produce pleasure—*garces à jour*, as Montaigne had already learned to call them. The habit of accepting any one who comes, and is ready to pay, makes them absolutely indifferent to the physique of their clients ; and in this they are below the street-walker, to whatever class she may belong, for the street-walker preserves at least the right of choice.

Formerly, when these melancholy creatures once entered a house they could never leave it, unless indeed in cases where a customer took a fancy to one of them and paid her debts in order to set her free. They were, in fact, most outrageously fleeced. They were made to pay four times the proper price for everything they required, and as they could never discharge their obligations without help they remained perpetually at the mercy of the proprietor. When they wanted to change, the owner of the house in which they happened to be, who was in relations with his colleagues in the same business, notified those who had vacancies in their staffs. The woman was then invited to choose, and, when she had chosen, her new master paid her debts, for which she, of course, remained responsible to him, and so on. Nowadays these barbarous customs, which were a disgrace to a democratic country, have happily been done away with. It is not, we believe, more than fifteen years since a law was passed enabling more equitable police regulations to be established, thanks to which the secluded prostitute has become comparatively free to enter or leave or re-enter her "cloister."

The life led in these houses is very simple. The women rise at ten and lounge about in loose dressing-gowns in the morning. They lunch at noon, and then put themselves

in the hands of the hairdresser. When his operations are concluded they turn to painting—a complicated operation for the prostitute of the brothel, who needs the most embellishment and who is the most elaborately painted of all her kind. From two in the afternoon they are “on duty,” and await clients in the *salon*. They chatter incessantly, always in the same empty way, about the thousand nothings which occur to their microscopic brains. Their talk is incoherence itself. Their ideas are quite unconnected—a series of impressions entirely unrelated. They quarrel, smoke, drink, and caterwaul songs, sentimental or obscene. They wear voluminous and diaphanous tea-gowns, black or coloured stockings, which serve as purses in which they put all the money they earn, and false jewellery in appallingly bad taste.

They are of all sorts and for all tastes. There are dark women and blond women and red-haired women, creoles, albinos, pretty women, ugly women, thin women, and women with mountains of fat. The youngest of them are twenty-one, for they are not allowed into the houses before they are of age. The oldest of them are forty and, in quite inferior establishments, even more. All this goes on under the eye of the under-manager, the trusted agent of the proprietress, who keeps them all in order, admonishes, instructs, fines, and makes reports about them for all the world like the usher at a school. At three in the morning, those who are not engaged for the night settle up the day's accounts with the head of the house—an elderly lady, usually well dressed and respectable in appearance—and retire to their garrets, where they have one bed between two—a very bad bed, it may be added, with a straw mattress, a bolster, and a cotton coverlet. In addition to this they are allowed two chairs and the table at which they paint themselves. It is a horrible life—a circle of hell which Dante overlooked.

They are under the august supervision of the police;



numbered, watched, and subjected to a bi-weekly medical inspection. They have ceased to have any interest in escaping, being free to go if they choose ; but they must, under penalty, inform the police of any change of domicile. They have the right to one day out per week, and if they wish to go out more often they must pay. The price is five francs in some houses and ten francs in others. They go out in the evening and must be back by noon on the following day at latest. Very few of them have lovers. They are satiated with men. But doctors who are competent to speak say that sapphic vice is widespread among them. Some have a lodging of their own where they keep the dresses they buy and any jewellery of value they may possess, and where they take any chance men that may accost them. A few have children to whom they are much attached. They visit them on their days out, and let them want for nothing.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CLANDESTINE PROSTITUTION

*Various modes of clandestine prostitution : Railway stations :  
Hotels : Bars : Omnibus offices : What some shops sell :  
" Widows " : " Mothers " and " daughters " : " Mari-  
cuses " : Actresses : The agony column : Rendezvous*

THE clandestine prostitution of Paris is the most interesting branch of the subject, for it is the most ingenious, the most fertile in resource, the cleverest at passing off what it has to sell, the most expert in creating an atmosphere of illusion.

As its name indicates, this province of vice is a thing apart. It is a mysterious trade, which depends for its success on histrionic capacity and on a tangle of tricks and intrigues which it would be impossible to unravel completely. Clandestine prostitution, like the spider, weaves its web in the shadows. It has its spies, its brokers, its beaters whose business it is to drive the game into the toils. Its methods are rarely direct, and whatever mode of action be chosen it very rarely comes into the light of day, and uses extraordinary and marvellously combined subterfuges to conceal its operations. Labyrinths are constructed the windings of which can never all be known to the police. A *mise en scène* is chosen which prevents the most subtle observer from guessing the kind of play on which the curtain is soon to rise. The leading parts are entrusted to impoverished stars who are willing to give private performances, to women of "a certain class" who have fallen on evil days,

to young girls who are ready to sell themselves, having found no one to take them on more honourable terms—in a word, to any woman of whatever class who is in a difficulty and so is open to the persuasions of the smooth-tongued emissaries of the trade.

In Paris, clandestine prostitution is everywhere. It surrounds a man in all his acts and avocations. It presents itself in hotels, in restaurants, in shops, in omnibus shelters, at the Louvre and the Luxembourg, where it appears armed with a Baedeker, ready to guide the foreigner. In certain circles—aye, even in official ones—it shows itself discreetly, almost impenetrably disguised. It insinuates itself into your pockets in the form of circulars, visiting cards, and unusual and curious invitations. In the newspapers you find it in advertisements on the fourth page where it well understands the use of such euphemisms as “massage,” the “removal of superfluous hair,” “dyeing,” “manicure,” or “private lessons in gymnastics.” It enters your house on the various pretexts of charity, literature, art, or applications for employment. It is to be seen at photographers’, in plays where ladies show themselves in tights, in reading-rooms and libraries, and in bars. It is familiar with every subtlety and knows the use of every kind of mask. It reveals itself slowly and does not give itself away till the ground has been made secure and the right moment has come.

The triumph of this form of prostitution is assured at the beginning of this century, when secret and selfish pleasure, the love of comfort, the search for poignant and abnormal pleasures are so much in favour with the *blasé* beings of our generation. The ordinary prostitute has no attraction for that section of the public which hates to vulgarise its pleasures by indulging in debauchery too flagrant or too commonplace. They want something possessing character and originality. An orgy to suit their fancy should be scented, subtle, and graceful ;

their gallantries must be veiled and dissimulated under the outward appearance of correctness and propriety. To such people clandestine prostitution offers just the right flavour of perversity, for it provides every sort of feminine corruption. The women who, under deceptive sign-boards, open shops in safe and secret places for the sale of new sensations are usually *cordons bleus* in the sensual cuisine, who keep samples of all the curiosities of vice and of every kind of depravity, and are therefore careful to furnish themselves with a staff of creatures who are a willing sacrifice to Venus Polluta.

Let us attempt a summary sketch of the various ingenious disguises, tricks, feints, and pretences to which the clandestine prostitute of Paris resorts, whether the scene of her operations be the streets or other public places, a shop, a theatre, a hotel, or a house of rendezvous.

Out of doors, clandestine prostitution is rampant. Many do not see it even when it is at their elbows, for one's powers of observation must be sharpened by long residence in Paris and by an innate curiosity in these matters before one can be certain, so deceptive are the appearances which this culpable trade assumes. The rake of old standing, the impenitent libertine, the corsair of the pavement—all those who love the streets of Paris for the sake of the women they meet there, the amateurs of fresh faces and alluring curves, are never deceived, for daily exercise in the chase keeps every sense alert. They divine everywhere the discreet invitation, the mere insinuation of an advance, and it is rarely indeed that they are mistaken.

"Believe me," said one of them to us, "that out of a hundred young women whom you will meet unchaperoned in the course of a stroll along the boulevards or the chief streets of Paris you may be certain that, however respectable they look, more than a third are adventuresses—*quarentes quem devorent!* I am not speaking, observe, of

obvious harlots. I take merely those whose bearing is modest, whose manner is virtuous, and whose composure is all but middle-class. If we say that forty per cent. are for sale we shall be near the truth, though the estimate is rather under than over the real number.

"Come," he continued, "let us observe. You see that young girl tripping along with a roll of music under her arm. You think she is an artist, or perhaps some young lady who has been having a music lesson. Follow her for a little, using the approved method and taking care not to frighten so wary a bird. Accost her at the psychological moment in some passage, square, or blind alley towards which the sly minx will have led you on. A hospitable room will soon receive you, and you will not be long in discovering what are the lessons given and received by the little lady who looks as if she came from the Conservatoire.

": Again, look at that pretty creature in deep mourning. How elegant she is and shapely in her black gown! Her charming pale face is delightfully framed by the crape of her English widow's cap, and the air of affliction on those features which were surely meant only for dimpling smiles inspires the spectator with sincere sentiments of pity. Hasten, then, to console her. Your sympathy will not go unrewarded. Follow on the track of the bereaved. She belongs to the department which 'does mournings' for a special class of client. A month before he went mad, Maupassant; in one of the last of his wonderful short stories, described these women under the name of '*les Tombales*.'

"Behold this adorable girl passing in the company of that respectable lady. Is she not a pupil at some girls' school? She is as fresh and charming as a half-opened rosebud. You are in ecstasies at such a delightful spectacle of youth and innocence; and think of the happy marriage the dear child is sure to make. Simple soul! Look more

closely at the venerable chaperon and exchange with her an imperceptible smile. A few minutes later pass ahead of the pair, and when you come to the first corner turn and confront the matron, saluting her as you would a friend. Compliment her on her daughter's charms, and propose calling on her. If you care for such things you will find the girl as complaisant as she is already calculating and depraved."

Mothers who sell their daughters as soon as they reach thirteen or fourteen are unfortunately only too common, and their bearing as they walk the streets does not escape those who understand these things. There are also sham waiting-maids, sham workgirls, sham sick-nurses, and even sham Sisters of Charity, whose business, when they are not working on their own account, is to canvass out of doors or from house to house for the numerous clandestine *salons* of the capital. Some there are who have a passion for disguise and who exercise their trade with as much skill as those subtle sleuth-hounds Vidocq, Soudan, and Rossignol. Every day they go out differently equipped to attempt different conquests in different circles. They are clever enough to assume the precise social tinge which is wanted in each case, and so they create for themselves a *clientèle* more numerous than that of any of their colleagues in any branch of Paris trade.

A favourite scene of operations is a railway station—the Gare de l'Ouest for choice, where there are such crowds of women that one is tempted to suppose that it received its name of Saint-Lazare because it is the favourite issue for prostitutes coming from the sanitary prison of the same name. Their game at such stations is, of course, the foreigner and the provincial—the Englishman arriving by Dieppe, and the suburban man of business who, when he comes to Paris, is often not unwilling to indulge himself with a little diversion at a neighbouring "*garni*" or "*garnot*" establishment.

Many of these pseudo-travellers provide themselves with a railway rug or a travelling-bag and dress themselves in the tailor-made English fashion. In that case they do not merely haunt the vestibules, the waiting-rooms, or the neighbouring cafés, but actually travel from Paris to Saint-Germain, or take the Ouest-Nord *via* Argenteuil, Enghien, and Saint-Denis—an itinerary which appears to suit their particular line of business. Some do the Paris-Versailles route, where there are plenty of foreigners. They all travel first class, and inspect the train carefully, choosing if possible a compartment in which there is a man alone. *En route* they make every effort to provoke the attack, and, if they succeed, they realise their *bonne fortune* either on the spot, or at the end of the journey.

Others of the clandestine sort frequent picture shows, Tattersall's, the Hôtel Drouot, courses of lectures or the reading-rooms at the Bon Marché or the Magasins du Louvre. There they are on the look-out for serious-minded clients, and consequently they themselves affect an interest in the fine arts, in literature, and intellectual things generally. They are often the most intelligent and interesting of their profession, and have quite a gift for conversation.

Some frequent only the large hotels, where, with the connivance of porters, valets, grooms, or upper servants, they get to know the names of new arrivals, find out their financial position, and lay siege in form to the victims of their choice. Then they have recourse to letters—and what clever letters!—or to visits in the character of canvassers for shirt-makers, jewellers, or tobacconists. Some even go the length of taking a room in the same hostelry if the coveted person is important enough to make it worth while, and the intrigue then proceeds more briskly, being favoured by the intimacy which results from the proximity of fellow-travellers.

Here, too, the mother, hired for the occasion, plays her part and often accompanies the “daughter,” who is going

on the stage and wishes to be placed under the foreigner's protection in a career in which it is so necessary to have support, guidance, and serious advice. The Parisian as a rule knows nothing of this branch of the business, but interesting information can be gleaned from foreigners who have experienced attentions of the kind described. Since the eighteenth century, when Sterne initiated us into the facilities provided at certain hotels on the *Rive Gauche*, it may be supposed that considerable advances have been made; and, in fact, in this sort of canvassing Paris is surpassed only by Buda-Pesth and by Japan; although, on the whole, the West has in such matters no need to fear comparison with the East.

Clandestine prostitution is sometimes carried on by means of circulars or through the newspapers, thanks to the "agony column," which is one of its most distinguished and correct, but also one of its least-known, mediums. It is a method which is coming more and more into fashion. The agony column, as an anonymous author has remarked, is one of the signs of the times. It has seized on the contemporary woman as the octopus seizes the foot of a bather rash enough to enter seas in which these creatures are common.

It would be a curious and amusing task to enumerate the classes of women who *work* the agony column, and a collection well worth making would be one which contained all the forms which these advertisements take. You find everything—genuine or simulated appeals to a lover, moods, distresses, or simply folly and vice. Women excel at this sort of composition and have a marvellous gift for baiting the hook.

The woman of the agony column is usually well educated, original, and a witty writer, and in the columns of the *Don Quichotte* or the *Beaumarchais* she produces phrases such as these: "Eve is bored. Write to her, X. Y., office of this paper," or, again, "A chilly swallow wants a nest. Who will give her one?"



She gets answers, stupid, amusing, impertinent, arrogant, or timid by turns, which, if she has any penetration, will show her clearly enough what is the moral and social position of her correspondent. It is therefore an excellent method for courtesans; who are using it more every day and competing with the respectable women who amuse themselves in this way.

Theatres which speculate upon the curiosity of the public by producing what are known as *pièces à femmes* are also hotbeds of clandestine prostitution. Whether they play fairy pieces for the delight of children, or *revues* which are crowded with characters who must appear in tights, every minx who is vain of her figure rushes to offer her services. Such women know very well that, on the pretext of a one-line part, they will have a favourable opportunity of exhibiting themselves as exquisitely clad as is possible, and of showing that if they have no talent they have, at any rate, an attractive pair of legs.

The managers of these houses, which have the reputation of being particularly Parisian in character, though their counterpart are probably found elsewhere also, are under no illusion as to the true nature of their business. Many a one would reply in the very words of Bordenave in Zola's *Nana*, who, speaking of the Variétés to the worthy La Faloise, exclaimed with the emphasis of conviction, "My theatre! You mean my brothel!" What other name can, in fact, be given to these enterprises, with which neither art nor literature has or can have anything to do? Carnal solicitation is their openly avowed purpose, and the spectator who sits in his stall through an evening and reviews the evolutions of these feminine battalions with their ever-changing dresses may bespeak any sort of feminine charms he may fancy, for he has had an opportunity of inspecting all the merchandise that is for sale.

Between the acts the young chappies and the melancholy old rakes who are the leading patrons of theatres of this

class are admitted to the delights "behind," where they indulge in feeble flirtations with these passive women in the middle of the dust and dirt, in an atmosphere poisoned with gas and humanity.

At the stage-door connoisseurs, escorts, suitors, and lovers mix in groups with the merely curious, awaiting the exit of the charmers. They glare at each other like china dogs, and they are content to wait for hours with angelic patience, often in evening dress, at these back entrances, which are horrible places, dirty, damp, and malodorous.

We must now track the clandestine prostitute into less accessible retreats where chance must serve us in lieu of observation; the shops, flats, and salons of all kinds in which women carry on a trade in their own bodies without solicitation and consequently without scandal. First of all we must speak of the shops which sell perfumery, gloves, artificial flowers, collars, ties, shirts, photographs, engravings, and even new books.

The exterior has no special feature, except perhaps that there is very little in the window, and that what there is allows you to see between the half-drawn curtains into an elegant but sparsely furnished shop, with a counter in the middle, covered with little articles, at which a woman sits and simpers, gracefully turning her head towards the street as soon as she feels that she is observed. If the customer accepts her invitation to enter, the curtains are discreetly drawn, and the conversation which follows very soon clears up the situation.

Usually there are two women in these "shops"—one of ripe age and notable *embonpoint*, the other a slim, girlish creature with her hair in plaits. They have a joint stock, and share the profits scrupulously every night. Their business hours are approximately from midday to midnight.

In the purlieus of the Rue Montorgueil, of the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle and the Boulevard du Château-d'Eau,

there are to be found establishments of a different character. These are the sham milliners, dressmakers, and jewellers established on the first floor of houses of ill-fame. On the doors are such inscriptions as "Mme. Jeanne, fleuriste," "Mlle. Alexandrine, modes," "Fiorina, artiste," or, again, "Pauline, plumes métalliques." It would require the pen of a Martial, a Suetonius; or a Juvenal of the present day to describe the putrescent immoralities of these dens of iniquity where the most unmentionable of the vices of the ancients are practised.

We shall only touch in passing on the keepers of furnished rooms and of wineshops who do so much to encourage clandestine prostitution of the baser sort in Paris. Police regulations intended to suppress this evil have been multiplied without success; the number of offences increases every day. The women who frequent these places and hold themselves at the disposition of customers are either servant girls attached to the house or else *habituées* brought up to their horrible trade. While the proprietor connives at the traffic which goes on in his house and allows his back rooms or his basement to be used for the purpose, the women force the consumption of alcohol by demanding expensive drinks of their clients, especially the "religious" liqueurs, such as Chartreuse and Bénédictine, which are priced very high when champagne is not ordered.

The average daily number of "deals" done by these women in low-class public-houses is astounding. It varies from ten or twelve on weekdays to fifteen or twenty on Sundays and holidays. The statistics of this branch of clandestine immorality are indeed surprising. According to a table published twenty years ago there were then no fewer than 15,000 prostitutes carrying on an illicit business in Parisian *hôtels garnis*. Those practising in shops numbered 2000; 20,000 women pursued their trade in rooms of their own; while those who haunted public

entertainments, such as balls and *cafés-chantants*, did not exceed 3000. It may be observed that these figures are optimistic.

The figures we shall never know are those concerning the high-class clandestine prostitution carried on through the medium of procuresses and the keepers of *maisons de rendezvous*. Here statistics are at fault, for the subject-matter is itself changing and uncertain. If we are to believe the adroit matrons, the distinguished old ladies, the venerable grandmothers who preside over the destinies of certain houses of recreation which are famous in the gayer circles of the capital which revolve about the boulevards or the elegant quarters near the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile, every woman in Paris has her price. These ladies have at their disposal a floating staff which can be mobilised at any moment; they produce albums of photographs (more or less *décolletés*) faithfully rendering the features, the smiles, and the attitudes of the actress, the fair unknown, or the disguised lady of the middle class, for the benefit of clients who have a well-lined purse. But besides all this, these agreeable and well-bred procuresses, whose gestures are as unctuous as their tongues are smooth, will tell you that—given a little patience—they are ready to bring to the arms of the sighing swain any woman whom he may happen to think particularly desirable. They have an organisation, they declare, which can “bring to reason” any woman in Paris whose fortune does not place her beyond the reach of temptations of a certain character. They have, in fact, a troop of female agents or canvassers who have a prodigious address in these matters. They start out on the quest at an early hour and begin by visiting the large shops, where they mark down the prettiest saleswomen or the most modest and attractive of the customers who appear to their experienced eye to possess the necessary qualities. They then visit and consult with their various

accomplices—ladies' maids, fortune-tellers, perfumers, and hairdressers. From them they learn all necessary particulars about their intended victims. They dress with great elegance, and in the afternoon they frequent the *grands couturiers*, scrape acquaintance with the customers, and thus discover all about the *jolies madames* who are deeply in debt. All this they note down in the register of the exploitable part of *Tout Paris*. In the evening they do the theatres, see the fair performers, and find out from their dressers all about the financial crises which oppress these charming creatures. Once a catastrophe becomes inevitable, they advance to the attack with all the artifices of rhetoric. They promise a golden future if only the lady will be sensible and nice about it, and respond, just a little, to the passion of an elegant gentleman who will be waiting on such and such a day at such and such an hour in a house to be indicated. The deepest secrecy and the most absolute discretion are assured.

Some of these procuresses give parties at their own houses, where "little ladies" assemble in full strength to meet foreigners of fashion, American millionaires; or provincial gentlemen in comfortable circumstances. At such gatherings there are tremendous bouts of baccarat; roulette and *trente et quarante* are constant features; and while the *habitués* are absorbed in play the hostess is busy making her introductions in the more secluded parts of the rooms, where she regulates the terms of her bargain with the sagacity and seriousness of a notary. She arranges marriages for fixed periods of three, six, or nine months, with power to renew at will, and duly charges her commission on the price. There are numerous agencies in Paris for left-handed unions of this kind, and anything you want can be provided according to the sum you are able to pay.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PHRYNE UP TO DATE

*Our hetæra : "Grandes cocottes" and "Belles petites" :  
General observations*

THERE is an anecdote told of a simple-minded person of Republican opinions, a member of the secret society of "the Seasons" which flourished under Louis-Philippe, who proposed at a meeting of that body that women of all classes should be subject to a kind of conscription in order that the public service of prostitution might be maintained. This, he contended, was the only way to secure that the daughters of the poor should not alone eternally serve as instruments of pleasure for the rich.

"Rubbish!" interjected a workman by way of protest. "What's the use of trying that nonsense on with us? The rich only get our leavings, and, what's more, everybody here knows it!"

Nothing can be truer. A prostitute usually meets with her first temptations to vice among the working class; and, indeed, the following sociological axiom may be laid down: "It is almost always in her own class and among men of her own rank in life that the virgin first experiences sensual pleasure."

Poor Guy de Maupassant thus formulated the results arrived at by all familiar with the statistics of vice in Paris: "The rich buy the bouquet after it has been gathered. They gather also, but it is always the second flowering, never the first."

The greater part of the courtesans who are now sought

after and famous, who constitute the *demi-monde* of notoriety, whose names and exploits are on every one's lips, and at the head of whom are the "queens of the left hand"; whose clothes, houses, and stables are described and advertised by their special organs in the Press—all these come from the people. They commence their career in the lowest ranks of society, experience the bitterest poverty of the very poor, and practise in the suburbs before, by dint of seniority, they gradually achieve publicity at an age when their talent for their profession is fully developed, but at which the joyous graces of youth have long passed away.

For some years back, however, there has been an increasing number of exceptions to this rule, and many more of the insubordinate daughters of the *bourgeoisie* are finding their way into the ranks of the highest class of Cyprians. But the proletariat is still the origin of by far the greater number.

In any case it should be noted that 90 per cent. of the most distinguished of these ladies never reach the zenith of their fame until they may fairly be classed among the veterans. Consider the most conspicuous of our great professionals—*belles petites, tendresses, agenouillées, horizontales*, or *dégrafées*—for all these terms have been applied to them during the last twenty years without, however, displacing the denomination of *cocotte*, which dates from the Second Empire. Study closely these high-priced damsels and you will be astonished to find how few of them are young, really pretty, or remarkably clever. Some, no doubt, have a certain acquired character of their own—a sort of artificial correctness of style. Others have assimilated the tone of the men with whom they have consorted, and have picked up a few phrases which are not deficient in a flavour of what passes in society for wit.

The famous breed of courtesans is extinct. Our hetæræ have been spoiled rather than improved by financial successes which have merely made them bourgeois, affected,

arrogant, and absurdly artificial. With the rarest exceptions, they have lost the careless gaiety of the *musettes* of a past generation, and have become grasping, cold, calculating creatures who sell love at a price. About them there is not the faintest suggestion of the cap and bells of Folly. Their profession is to be the beasts of burden of luxury; they minister to the vanity of certain men as appurtenances of their wealth and position; and they exercise their profession with the zeal, precision, and system of the vendor of delicacies who delivers his goods in exchange for ready money.

Speaking generally, these sinners, who are without intellect if not without intelligence, without education if not illiterate, are no longer to be excused on the plea of sudden and passionate caprices, of irresistible impulses from the heart. Their one motive is their personal interest, and by that they are both dominated and blinded. Cupid has long since fled from the plutocratic atmosphere which surrounds them and in which there is room for nothing but annuities, investments, and feverish speculation.

Very few of these high priestesses of Cythera succeed alone and unassisted by the support of others. To succeed in Paris one has need of notoriety, advertisement, and proper agents. Theatrical managers are the Barnums of actors; publishers are the medium of advertisement for authors; and picture dealers act as incense bearers for painters. Similarly, and for precisely the same reasons, the procuress is the natural ally of the kept woman. Let us hear what M. Maxime du Camp has to say on the subject:

"Courtesans at the head of their profession have almost always been launched by women who recognise a certain beauty in them and who divine that the seeds of evil will germinate rapidly in the congenial soil of their vicious instincts. They therefore seek them out, clean them up, and push them forward. The woman who performs this task is termed the 'ogress'; she receives a commission on



the profits of her pupil. In this sort of business, for which it would be hard to find a name, operations are conducted on an extravagant scale. In order to establish a poor girl in rich and refined society it is the first and barest necessity that she should be properly dressed. As a rule she has but few clothes, and these both common and shabby. The 'ogress' intervenes, and lets out to her a complete equipment—rings, jewels, dresses, shawls, watches, and necklaces at enormous prices which often exceed the real value of the articles."

Nowadays more than ever the harlot of the first flight needs an impresario to start her on her career and to supply the necessary capital for equipment; for in order to be classed and catalogued as belonging to *la haute*, in order to command a good price and to get out of the rank and file; she must rush off to Nice during the winter and show herself in gorgeous raiment on the Promenade des Anglais. She must attract the eyes and the attentions of smart people who will have to do only with a certain conspicuous category of *demi-mondaines* who advertise themselves by some assumed and high-sounding aristocratic name—Liane de Cougy, Laure de Rubempré, Blanche Daniche; Alice de Korrigan, or some other distinguished pseudonym calculated to flatter the vanity of the most abject *rastaquouère*.

The author of a study entitled *Souteneurs en habit noir* observes that the grand *demi-monde* has its own special type of *souteneur*. These are the *lanceurs*, the counterparts and rivals of the "ogress." It need not be supposed that a young woman, however beautiful, need only have a longing to misbehave herself in order to acquire a train of adorers in a single day. A certain amount of preparation is necessary. We hear tales of goose-girls who come to Paris in sabots and who the very next year are driving their carriages. But before they achieve this luxury they must pass through a period of

training, and the *lanceur* is the trainer whose business it is to produce the coming winners on the Cyprian turf. Two things are indispensable—alluring clothes and a luxurious flat. The *lanceur* advances money to buy the one and to hire the other; one may guess the consideration he exacts and receives. Gloved or ungloved, the *souteneur's* only weapon is his fist, and he does not scruple to use it.

The typical *lanceur* is a florid person with a swarthy countenance, oily hair, and dazzling rings. Fundamentally; he is the same as the low-class bully of the outskirts. The general characteristics, as the anthropologists would say, are the same; the rest is merely a question of drapery. Prado and Pranzini were *lanceurs* who had been cleaned out at play. They were *souteneurs*, well dressed and even well educated; Prado had even a tincture of letters. They ended as their low-class colleagues end, in committing murder.

The *hetæra* once launched must display an activity which can only be called infernal if she is to maintain her advantage over humbler competitors. She must be hard and pitiless with the men whom she drags at her chariot wheels. She must sell herself very dear, and make her slaves feel how innumerable are the attentions and how abject the homage of which she is the object. Moreover, she must submit herself to all the exigencies of fashion and conform to all the conventions of the smart set. She must study the reigning code. To this end she will learn to ride in order that she may appear in the Bois in a habit severely simple in the best tradition of the *haute école* and show off her horsemanship to an admiring world. She will know how to drive a motor-car, a phaeton, or a dog-cart. Her position will oblige her to be able to chatter superficially in English in order that she may be able to bandy with her acquaintance the Saxon phrases which are obligatory if one is to be in he swim. Equally, of course, she must have a notion

of the various sorts of sport, and get up the principal genealogies of the *Almanach de Gotha*. She must be familiar with cosmopolitan society and have a foothold in all Parisian circles; she must have at least a veneer of cleverness; her surroundings must be comfortable and yet characteristic, and she must know how to choose furniture and *bric-à-brac* which do not too much suggest the *parvenue*. Her clothes must always be in the fashion of the day after to-morrow and never in that of yesterday; her servants must be very smart indeed and her liveries impeccable.

On the other hand, if one of this class does meet with a man whose attachment is durable and who gives her an assured position, this is almost never due to real love or even to physical passion. Men of the world who go in for a conspicuous liaison with a *cocotte* do so in the passionless frame of mind in which one might sign a contract by which one's mistress undertakes to direct and organise a thoroughly correct establishment, the luxury of which will be a credit to one.

Such men keep a woman as they keep a yacht, a stud, or a sporting estate, and they require of her everything that can augment the reputation of their fortune and improve their position in those circles where one is observed and esteemed according to the scale on which one lives. Thus they are more susceptible to the toilettes of a fair friend than to her beauty or her youth. They will value her more if she can gallop a thoroughbred than if she is as witty as Sophie Arnould; they adore her for her prodigality, her caprices, her superficiality, and not by any means for her goodness or affection, or the charm of her caresses. What they require of her is not love, rarely even sensual satisfaction; it is simply the consecration of their celebrity as *viveurs*. It therefore behoves these contemporary Phrynés to be *exigeantes*, and to squander on jewellery, clothes, and furniture the money the circula-

tion of which it is their chief mission to stimulate. The more men they have ruined the more they will be sought after; for their fame will grow in proportion to the number of society bankruptcies which they have caused. Such is the decree of human vanity, which is immutable and eternal, and as foolish as the manners which it inspires.

It is easy to understand that for many women who have intellect, or who have in them some remnant of romance, or even some Bohemian tendency, such a life is difficult to endure, if not altogether intolerable. Courtesans who contrive to keep any independence of mind in spite of their contact with the smart set pursue their profession only so long as it is necessary to make their pile. But in any case they are never so successful as others of their class who are less intelligent but better fitted for the life.

Of all the various sorts of prostitutes of whom we have given a short sketch in these chapters, the least interesting is the high-class *hetara* with her secret miseries and outward splendours. The higher one ascends in the social scale the less, as a rule, does one find anything picturesque, and it is one of the aims of this book to show that the twittering of the women of the people is more interesting to the observer than the isolated grandeurs of those above. There is a law of compensation in this world of which sufficient account is not often taken. The counterparts of poverty are often more truly tragic than poverty itself.

## CHAPTER XIX

### DAUGHTER, WIFE, AND MOTHER

*The true Parisienne in society : Her charities, her faith, her duties, her aspirations, her devotion : Her true part in everyday life : Her occupations : Painting, music, and reading : Paris—the hell and paradise of women : The Devils who are conspicuous hide the Angels*

IT was noticed in the first chapter that the frail women, the *demi-mondaines*, the unfortunates of the streets, although persistently obvious to the spectator in Paris, are, after all, only superficial phenomena. They may be compared with the foam of the sea waves, obscuring from time to time the transparency of the waters. We have studied these phenomena and sketched them from all points of view, but the picture of the Parisienne would be incomplete and unfaithful if we concluded here. The chosen companions of our lives, our mothers, wives, and daughters, would be unrepresented, besides the many others who have abnegated self to devote their lives to religion or humanity. These must now take their rightful place—a place so important that all others sink into insignificance beside it, and we will endeavour to describe the virtuous woman in her various aspects, always admirable, at times heroic, and for the most part gracious and sympathetic. The other women are a large, heterogeneous company, all differing from each other, conspicuous by reason of their work, their poverty, or their scandals. The virtuous women pass in silence and unnoticed, but they are as legion. In marking the exception we must not overlook the rule,

and the rule for a woman is to be faithful, devoted, religious; charitable, and maternal.

Feminine treachery and unfaithfulness are an inexhaustible subject with our novelists. For them the study of human nature is reduced, in ninety cases out of a hundred, to analysing the ways and means of adultery. According to our authors, and the gossip of clubs and smoking-rooms; it would seem that a man is not able to talk for ten minutes with a woman without asking her to complete her final dishonour, and that she scarcely waits to be asked twice before consenting. We regret to differ with the national novelist with his pretensions to be considered a realist and psychologist, but we affirm the exact contrary. There is no country in the world where a woman's home is held more sacred, especially if she has children; and the men who have the temerity to infringe this law are rare. Infinite trouble, and even danger, would follow in consequence.

There are, of course, exceptions; it would be absurd to ignore the violence of passion, the waywardness of some temperaments, and the follies of vanity. But these are only isolated cases. The large majority of women in Paris are as well, or even better, able to keep their self-respect as elsewhere. The busiest fashionable life, with its engagements for *matinées*, afternoon tea, theatres, balls, receptions, drives in the Bois, travels, visits to the sea, and all kinds of sport—none of these distractions are able to destroy in most Parisiennes their conscientious sense of duty.

A great lady who has played a brilliant part in society is quite ready, after arranging a good marriage for her daughter, to retire gradually from the world and devote herself to works of charity. The fan of the ballroom is exchanged for the alms-plate; and the two objects are not as incompatible as they may appear. The dance and evening's enjoyment are not a bad preparation for the endeavour to procure a little joy or relief for others. It is

this feeling that frequently prompts women in society to take an active part in bazaars or private lotteries, or in associations for helping wounded soldiers, unfortunate girls, the homeless poor, and orphans. Many are not satisfied with the performance of this collective and somewhat ostentatious form of charity. They go out to narrow, dirty streets and mount evil-smelling staircases, their only reward being the faint, grateful smile of the poor mother for the nourishment brought for herself, the warm garment for the baby, or the help towards the payment of her rent.

The various benevolent societies are admirable institutions in theory, and reflect honour on the nation ; but the charity distributed by them is impersonal, blind, and hard, even when it is not outrageously partial and interested, as it sometimes is. After much interrogation, inspection, and inquiry, the poor applicant may be lucky enough to receive bread or tickets for clothes or linen, and his miserable life may be a little prolonged ; but there is no heart behind these shabby, rough, and irritating forms of charity, and in the majority of cases the recipient comes away with a grudge against the donors.

It is a strange fact that the money intended for the use of the poor (whether in the guise of poor-rate, theatre or racecourse tax, ancient bequests, or new donations) is spent, in the first instance, in feeding, clothing, or providing with cash an army of functionaries, a few of whom annually squander sums which would keep fifteen or twenty families from want. Christ said, "Sell all your goods and give to the poor." With us the reverse is the case ; it is the poor who distribute and from whom we derive our incomes. Lazarus still feeds on crumbs dropped from the table, with this difference, that the table and the food are his own.

How much better, could the relief reach its object without any loss on the way ; if the distributor were some tender-hearted woman dispensing the charity with tact

and delicacy, and who by her mere presence would convey to the unhappy recipient the feeling that he was cared for. If this is a glimpse into Utopia, it is a certain method of anticipating the future; and any dream is welcome that diverts our minds from the unpleasant reality. For its realisation, a means lies ready to our hand in the person of the Parisian woman, or, to be exact, the French-woman. We can, some of us, take our minds back to a terrible time of trial, and by an effort of memory see our women, in aprons and red ambulance crosses, tenderly caring for our wounded soldiers. These nurses were recruited from all ranks of society: the working-woman, who had learnt in her own home to nurse her husband and children, side by side with the lady in society. This rivalry in devotion would be as keen as then, should a sad occasion for it arise. The spirit of charity (true charity, let it be said, not only because it is voluntary but because it is a sacrifice of personal safety and comfort) is always to be found among the women of Paris.

At the present day the foundations of faith are sapped or destroyed, scepticism is universal; society seems to have no other motive than the "struggle for life" or the culture of selfish individualism, and one asks if charity can exist in this arid soil except by a miracle. But no miracle is necessary. The soil appears hard and dry because of the dust on its surface; underneath is fruitfulness, by reason of the unchanging human heart. It would be interesting to make a close study of this modern scepticism; this overflow of egotism, vaunted by some, and deplored by others; but at this moment we are considering the women of France, and we do not hesitate to say, in spite of astonished and even indignant protests to the contrary, that the women of our day show so much disinterested kindness, are so full of active and devoted charity, because they have kept their faith. Faith, that all-powerful lever which can remove mountains, finds its fulcrum every-



where. The love of humanity, aspirations towards a better state of society, all forms of religion, and even some superstitions, have for their origin a faith in something, and inspire the same virtues, produce the same results, and also lead to the same excesses. To have faith at all is the one thing needful; to have an aim to pursue, and to follow the light of an ideal, as did the shepherds of old. The habit of reasoning, a degenerate product of reason, leads us often to the destruction of all ideals, persuading us that they are childish and superfluous. Vanity or cynicism may lead to the same conclusion, at least superficially. But women are seldom dominated by these influences. Emotion is to them more convincing than argument. They are spiritual, sympathetic, and tender toward physical weakness. Coarseness wounds and repels them. They must love and believe. The religion of their childhood satisfies them, and the enormous majority of Parisian women are Catholics. Perhaps they do not all practise their religion to the same extent, and no doubt the performance of their religious duties is intermittent, and in the routine of daily life these are apt to be put on one side; but in her great joys and sorrows the Catholic woman turns instinctively to her religion. Then she goes to the neglected sacraments; she makes resolutions and keeps them. She burns candles to the Blessed Virgin for the cure of her sick husband, and has Masses said at her parish church, and alms distributed to the poor for her child's safety. Her religion is in exact proportion to her emotions. But, whether under the influence of emotion or not, she will not allow any banter on the subject of her faith. A few women may be excepted, who pose as philosophical and make an affectation of only accepting religion so long as it incurs no liability (to quote an American woman who hated cant, "Because it is comfortable"). Apart from these exceptions, the Parisienne will not permit her orthodoxy to be called in question. If she neglects to hear Mass it is because she

rose too late, or because her children detained her, or the dressmaker disappointed her and she had "nothing to put on," or for some other unanswerable reason ; and it is a fact that, in spite of all the difficulties and occupations that fill her morning, the Parisienne goes more and more frequently to Mass, and tries, often successfully, to induce her husband to go with her, tactfully persuading him that in doing so he is performing an act of independence and opposition to the Government.

This little hostility to the powers that be is amusing and inoffensive, but it has its counterpart in another action much less amusing and of infinite importance. Under the pretext of religious neutrality the Government has for years past been engaged on a policy to which they give the barbarous name of the "laicisation" of the hospitals. This consists in replacing the Sisters of Charity by lay nurses and attendants. This depressing subject has been already noticed in the chapter on female Civil Servants. To the Sister of Charity the care of the sick is a mission chosen for the love of humanity and the love of God. It is a fruit of the sacrifice she has made in renouncing the world, her human relations, and all worldly interest : it realises in a measure her highest ideals and prepares her for heaven. For the lay nurse the care of the sick is a more or less revolting task. It is badly paid, and is accomplished as speedily as possible ; to get time for her personal affairs, her family engagements, her distractions, and pleasures. It would be childish to discuss the question as to whether the Sister or the lay nurse is the better fitted for the task. For a lay nurse to be as efficient as a Sister, she must have as great a devotion to humanity as the Sister has to God. Sometimes this is the case, but it is assuredly not usual. The devotion which is only adequately rewarded in a future state is hard to attain, and harder still to persevere in. Is it to be believed that the necessary courage and inspiration will be found in such maxims as "We are all

brothers," "We must help one another," "We owe our lives to our neighbours," with no reward beyond a fee, and no restraint beyond a fine or a reproof? The heroism drawing strength from such abstractions is too transcendental to be anything but rare indeed; and from the personal experience of many who have been through the wards of the lay hospitals, it has never yet been encountered there. Moreover, only a very small proportion of the hospital nurses belong to Paris. The probationers, nurses, and superintendents are recruited mainly from the crowds of provincial women who come to Paris in search of employment, and after attempting a hundred other callings try their hand at the hospitals till something better turns up.

On the other hand, Parisiennes of every class are to be found in large numbers in convents or the smaller congregations. They wear the rough dress of the Carmelites and the finer habit of the *Dames de l'Assomption* with the same grace and courage. They hurry along with gentle good humour, wrapped in the cloak of the Little Sisters of the Poor; their refined profiles are to be seen under the cap of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. They adapt themselves to every case. The hardest tasks become pleasant, because they perform them inspired by the enthusiasm of their faith.

Most women are naturally nervous and imaginative, and the Parisienne is especially so, by reason of her individual education and an ultra-refined civilisation. The germs of religious faith planted by the teaching and example of her mother, and fostered by the convent-school education, often take entire possession of her soul and determine an irresistible vocation. One hardly realises the profound impression made by religious ceremonies on the heart, and even the senses, of a young girl, inspiring an absolute confidence in the love of God. It would be difficult to describe the supernatural joy she experiences under the

vaulted choir, in the dim light filtering through the stained-glass windows, the air heavy with incense, the splendour before her eyes of texture and colour, and the majesty of the priests in their vestments, while she sings the praises of her Creator, of the Master she loves. One cannot guess what thoughts lie behind that pure brow, or what meditation interrupts her reading, what desires and suggestions are inspired by that closed book on the mind of this girl, still a child in years. Is she dreaming of yesterday's ball, of the dresses she is to wear to-morrow? Does some cherished image pass before her eyes while her heart is gently stirred? Are her thoughts fixed on the future, and will it be one of worldly triumph or of calm domestic joys? Perhaps so, but one may also imagine that all these suggestions, however real to the worldly imagination, are nothing to her, and that, like St. Theresa, this young girl is lost in the ecstatic joy of the love of God.

The same causes may produce quite different effects. Mysticism may enervate, but it also excites. The former envelops the soul in a torpor of ecstasy, enclosing it from all other objects save Him whom it loves. The other effect inspires it to fight and conquer; to convert other souls, to help as many others as possible, to share in the same benefits. The woman with this faith is an admirable instrument of propaganda, of persuasion and influence. She is daunted by nothing. To give an instance, it is she who, scarcely knowing a word of French, attired in a shabby dress and grotesque bonnet, invades Paris under General Booth's standard, pushes her way fearlessly between the tables of cafés, and with a pathetic and ridiculous persistence offers the Salvation Army paper to the sceptics of the boulevard.

Between this soldier of Christ's army and the vehement female orator who demands her political rights or denounces social iniquities there is not as great a difference as one might suppose. The political orator also has her faith; her

religion takes root in the Paris pavements more readily than does that of the little Salvation Army champion. This is a fact which can be stated without an entire comprehension. But, of whatever origin, the motive power is of the same order. Both are aiming at an ideal, although the political or social reformer limits her horizon to this world and the present life ; for her, salvation consists in the emancipation of women. We will not consider the question of the condition of women after they have attained that emancipation. To judge from some of the emancipated specimens, it might be thought that all the charm and grace of womanhood will disappear, and that nothing will remain but a sort of abortive man, awkwardly masquerading in a skirt. But, without insisting on this unnatural doctrine, it cannot be denied that the votaries of feminine socialism are inspired by a lively spirit of charity. They are engaged to a great extent in works of benevolence : they found societies as a remedy against prostitution, and they are useful also in the sense that thoughtful minds, by the suggestion of their theories, are led to inquire what progress is to be logically expected in the exercise of women's intellectual faculties, and to conclude that her true vocation does not lie there, and that her emancipators lead her into shirking the obligations of nature, instead of impressing on her its rights and dignities. "Power lies in calmness," says Madame Romieu. "The curses of the female ranters have no real power nowadays to move or convince."

Let us return to the theory of the feminine ideal. The deviations of the mystical mind are not exhausted. They lead to the most unlikely superstitions. They conduct their victims to miraculous fountains, on doubtful pilgrimages, to those skilful personages who have the "gift," and who heal with a word or a touch. They induce them to hold out their hands to fortune-tellers, to consult with naive confidence somnambulists, phrenologists, palmists, graphologists, or sibyls who profess to read the future

in tea-leaves or cards. But these manifestations are accidents, and perhaps negligible ones. Mystic exaltation in its various forms is not to be found in all feminine minds. The greater proportion of the sex are better balanced, wiser, and, let us say, more human. The desire to find by main force a paradise during this life reminds one of La Fontaine's astrologer, who, by looking too intently at the stars, found himself at the bottom of a well. Setting aside these exceptional cases, sometimes sublime but always more or less neurotic, the Parisian woman finds in her home and natural surroundings everything to satisfy her intellectual and moral needs, and opportunity to exercise all her virtues. She has countless occupations in addition to her social distractions, religious services, lectures, her home, humble or luxurious as the case may be. She can study painting, music, and other arts if she is so minded. Amateur talents are often held in contempt, especially if the amateur is a woman; but the excellence of the art produced is not of so much importance as its benefit to the producer. "Professionals" stand by themselves; they have other aims, and by their appeal to the public they invite criticism. But if a woman chooses to occupy her leisure time in trying to reproduce beauty of which she feels the value and charm, what does it matter whether she has talent or not? She may only produce rubbish; but surely no one has a right to criticise her. Moreover, if she works for her personal taste, and not for mere fashion or vanity, she will find her intellectual interests and the pleasure of her art as fully satisfying as those of a genius who produces his masterpieces. At the present day talent is fairly widespread, and many women possess quite enough of it to please their husbands, educate their children in good taste, and beautify their homes.

Music is for the Parisian a source of comfort, happiness, and intellectual pleasure. Skilful executants on the piano

are without number, but it is hardly necessary nowadays to be a great performer. It is sufficient to have a feeling for music, and to understand sympathetically the great masters in their subjects and developments. The mind will be elevated above the dry facts of life into a world of dreams where all is in accord with one's natural tastes and aspirations.

After the study of music, or perhaps before it (for the ear is a less faithful and more capricious servant than the eye), comes literature, which supplies almost inexhaustible food for feminine imagination. Poetry, the music appealing directly to the mind by reducing the intermediary of the senses to a minimum, has, and will always have, its lovers. A sonnet, a few lines, are enough to bring smiles or tears, to delight and fortify the soul, to explain many of the problems of life, or to open illimitable horizons in the world of ideas. To read a little, to dream much, is the magic formula of the eternal connection between the poet and the woman. But in literature novels have the precedence. The woman who is not fascinated by them is rare. All inequalities of education, position, and money are merged in the universal passion for novels. Taste, no doubt, varies according to situation, and a psychological study which engrosses a woman in society would only make the devotee of the novelette yawn. But between these extremes there is a vast field where all degrees of women meet in a common interest. Who has not heard a hundred times the remark from feminine lips, "As soon as I begin to read a novel I can't tear myself away from it. I can hardly leave it for meals, and when I go to bed I read it to the end, and dream of it all night"?

These pages are not meant for a discourse on morality, so we will not quote the opinions of grave and learned men on the good and evil effects of reading novels. The worst books are not the frankly indecent ones. Clean-minded readers are disgusted by these at the first page. As to the others, I think that they are only insidiously

evil in their influence on the women already coquetting with danger, who look out for evil and are prepared for it by their own secret desires.

Travels and historical memoirs are beyond any charge of frivolity, and may have a romantic attraction for many. They are read by serious-minded women, or by those who would appear so, or by those who educate their children at home and confine themselves to serious reading, and will allow no other in their households; also by those who like to be considered learned or scientific, who pride themselves on knowing the sub-prefectures of France, the dates of all the kings, and the difference between an isosceles and an equilateral triangle. This is a parlous position; the next step takes them to the discussion of atavism, capital, psychic phenomena, bimetallism, the good of the people, Ibsen's plays, and evolution. Perhaps they are forced to this from necessity. God forbid that one should ridicule the unfortunate women who are left alone to fight their own battles in life, who are obliged to arm themselves for the conflict, scourge their memories and ink their fingers, pass examinations, and become graduates, lady doctors, governesses, clerks, or electricians! They are no more to be ridiculed or criticised than the factory-worker who earns her living, because her husband's wages are not sufficient to keep herself and her children. But to be learned for pleasure, for amusement, or for "pose" is the most grotesque and stupid part a woman can play.

This is an age of pedantry, and it is no wonder if women, in their desire to be guided, and to mould themselves after an example, should take on the manners and tone which distinguish the leading spirits of the day. A great movement is on foot which must inevitably bring about this result. This movement is called the higher education of women. Up to the present time the young girl, whether educated in a convent, a lay school, or at home, received instruction which, if elementary, was all-sufficient for the



social position she was meant to occupy. An endeavour was made to develop in a reasonable direction the graceful, delicate, and gentle side of her nature in a sound moral atmosphere, and to teach her carefully some special accomplishment, with a smattering of others. Her mother's lessons, the examples she saw around her, initiated her without dogmatic formula into her future duties as mistress of a house, wife, and mother. It was not considered necessary to put her through a course of social morality or of matrimonial laws in order that she might become a gentle, sweet, and useful companion to a good man. The ideas of Fénelon and Madame de Lambert were followed, eliminating whatever was chimerical or excessive. No doubt there were abuses and mistakes; but what system is free from them? This regimen, however, contained the elements at least of perfection, and day by day it improved. In any case it tended to make of our girls true women, graceful and dainty, and prepared them for the obligations laid on their sex. Surely that system was not a bad one which, owing to the women trained in it, has given us the reputation of being the best-mannered people in the world! But to-day, unfortunately, the foreigner will learn nothing of the fine manners or courtesy of the French people; on the contrary, we are imitating the want of ceremony and rudeness of which the foreigner is so much ashamed. The girls are taught a quantity of subjects, superfluous when they are not absolutely dangerous; and the whole educational system, following suit, becomes more and more like that of the boys. Its aim is degrees and diplomas, a larger number of candidates attend at each course, and in consequence the difficulty of the examinations increases. Subjects are multiplied, questions grow more complicated. History is a perfect arsenal of problems, and mathematics a kind of Chinese puzzle. The girls learn everything, from Egyptian dynasties to Scandinavian mythology, trigonometry, book-keeping, modern

languages, Latin, Greek, philosophy, natural history, physics, chemistry, literature, astronomy—all are stuffed into the young girls' brains, and excite them still further to pass brilliant examinations. Gymnastics and games are added; and if a few moments are left free, competent persons are ready to initiate them in the mysteries of dressmaking and cooking. They are turned out perfectly accomplished creatures. They are instructed in various laws to make them devoted wives, and in physiology to give them a desire to bear children. As a direct result they become artificial, their bodies and minds are warped, they are unfeminine without acquiring virility, and are fashioned into a kind of third sex.

What is the object of this system of education? Do the girls from any point of view get any advantage from it? Will they be better off, more respected, happier? The answer is more than unsatisfactory. There is not space here to discuss it at any length, but one may draw this conclusion, that for the more favoured by position and means this mass of knowledge, without any faith as a safeguard, leaves the woman unbalanced, vague, uncertain between her duty and her capricious desires, incapable of directing herself, and, what is more, incapable of accepting direction from others, for she is convinced that her knowledge places her above all guidance. As for the large majority (for through every social degree the craze has taken root), the results are ill-assorted marriages, where the wife considers herself superior to the husband; crowds of deplorably needy and ambitious women demanding careers; thousands of unfortunates who sink to poverty and prostitution, and one more cause of the growing depopulation.

There are reassuring points, however. On the one side the very exaggeration of the system, which must sooner or later lead to a reaction; on the other the natural good sense of our race, on whom bad institutions and false

reasoning have never taken a permanent hold. Paris is the furnace where the different good qualities and defects of the provinces are burnt and refined, producing the ultimate charming and finished creature who forms the subject of these pages—the Parisienne. Whatever the appearances, the Parisienne, as a rule, knows how to protect herself from the scourge. She has taken the malady, but she possesses its antidote. Underlying all the apparent cynicism, mockery, and frivolity of the Parisian character, through its most foolish infatuations and its lightest whims, may be discerned a sly smile, revealing some doubt, some reserve, resulting at an unexpected moment in a pause or a recoil. Women, by nature mysterious and elusive, possess this characteristic in a marked degree. No conclusion is absolutely to be drawn. The portrait is one of vague outlines and fleeting colours, and cannot pretend to precision of line or tint. It is clear also that, in spite of an encyclopædic education, whose evident tendency is to substitute material desires for spiritual ones, and of the mischief that this form of education has already done, the Parisian woman has preserved the great ideal that makes the strength and nobility of woman—i.e. the maternal instinct. The working-woman, the great lady, the shopwoman, the *bourgeoise* have all the passion of motherhood. The exception is an anomaly, almost negligible, and more than counterbalanced by the number of frivolous women who become serious-minded and respected as soon as they have children.

Nature is tenacious of her rights. In the sentimental language of the novelists of a century back, there is a saying that expresses an eternal truth, "Before all things, woman is *amante* and mother." Of the two characteristics the second is the more permanent. The Parisienne is the first to advocate the nursing of her own babies. A repugnance almost amounting to hatred is felt for the wet nurse by those whose health, occupations, the anxiety of earning

a living, or even alleged social duties, oblige them to employ her. Later on the mother is her child's first instructor. If a boy, he must of necessity be soon handed over to others; but she follows him in mind, a little uneasy and nervous, like a hen who sees the duckling she has reared take to the water. Some mothers will not be discouraged, and learn a little Latin grammar and geometry to help the boy with his school work. In such cases it may be an advantage to have taken a learned degree. But it has not yet been proved that learned women have children like the others, or that, like the others, they love those they may have. Perhaps in these cases, as the difficulty would be infinitely less, the effect produced would be small. Schoolmasters often fail in the education of their own children, and no doubt mothers with a masculine education would not succeed any better. For her daughters the Parisian woman may care up to the time of their marriage. For them she learns her catechism afresh, inquires into theological questions, and draws up religious lessons, to the delight of the parish priest and her own edification. It is owing to her, and her desire to share as much as possible in her child's life, that courses of lectures (*cours*) have been instituted, where she attends with her daughter, taking notes, sharing the pride of success, the humiliation and suspicion when the marks do not seem to correspond with the work done. We will come to an end on this happy impression of maternal devotion. Here is woman's true mission—to create, maintain, and perpetuate the family through the child. And, in spite of noisy demonstration, this primitive feeling is still found, whatever is said to the contrary, in the heart of the Parisienne.

It has been truly said, "In the morning of life woman is man's charm and delight; in the evening she is his consolation." The Parisienne is no exception to this rule. Underneath her light, slightly mocking expression are

concealed rare qualities of devotion and self-sacrifice. She is charitable, she understands the art of consolation, she prizes intelligence, talent, and gaiety more highly than riches. She is, more than any other woman, a true Bohemian in feeling and taste, and she is full of the milk of human kindness spoken of by Shakespeare, and she pours it out abundantly for those she loves, and often for those who love her. The modest girl, the sober-minded wife, the wise mother, are to be found in Paris in greater numbers than in any other place ; for Paris is both the hell and the paradise of women. The devils are often so conspicuous that we can scarcely see the angels, but the angels predominate, although they sometimes pass on their way unseen.



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